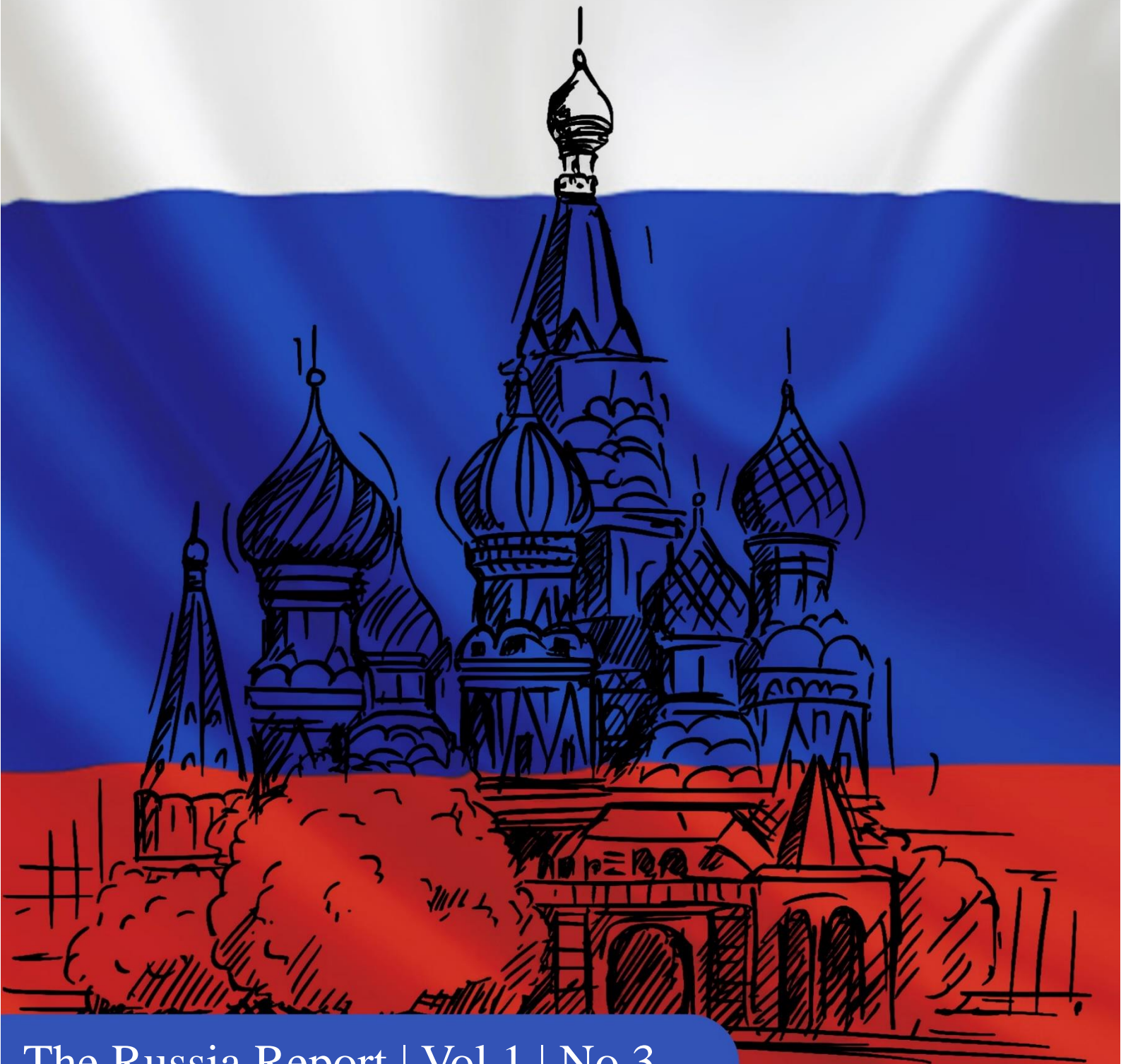


# CLAWS Newsletter



The Russia Report | Vol 1 | No 3

by Anusua Ganguly

## **From Moscow**

### **Vladimir Putin meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi**

[President of Russia](#), [Global Times](#), [TASS](#), April 1, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Kremlin to discuss strengthening bilateral ties and preparing for President Xi Jinping's upcoming visit to Russia. The meeting highlighted the deepening strategic partnership between the two nations, mutual respect, and collaboration in global affairs, including at the UN, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Both sides emphasised the importance of marking the 80th anniversary of victory in World War II together, reflecting shared history and values. Wang Yi conveyed warm greetings from Xi Jinping and affirmed that China-Russia cooperation is long-term, stable, and not directed against any third parties.

### **Russian Diplomat: Washington's Ukraine Proposals Ignore Root Causes**

[TASS](#), [The International Affairs](#), [The Moscow Times](#), April 1, 2025

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov stated in an interview with *International Affairs* magazine that the United States' proposed frameworks for resolving the Ukraine conflict fail to tackle its fundamental causes.

Ryabkov emphasised that despite efforts by U.S. President Donald Trump to establish a ceasefire framework, there has been no clear directive to Kyiv to end the war. He pointed out that the proposed models overlook Russia's core demand to address the root causes of the conflict.

While acknowledging the seriousness of Washington's proposals, Ryabkov stressed that Moscow cannot accept them without significant adjustments, highlighting Russia's well-developed set of priorities based on extensive negotiation efforts, including recent talks in Riyadh.

### **Russian Assets Blocked in Switzerland Total \$8.4 Billion**

[TASS](#), April 1, 2025

As of March 2025, the total value of Russian assets blocked in Switzerland has risen to 7.4 billion Swiss francs (\$8.4 billion), according to a spokesperson for the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

The increase is attributed to the completion of investigations, which accounted for 1.7 billion francs (\$1.9 billion), a rise in the value of frozen assets by 320 million francs (\$362 million), and an expansion of sanctions worth 130 million francs (\$147.4 million). However, the overall blocked assets declined by 510 million francs (\$578 million) due to approvals for the exceptional release of assets, asset depreciation, and the removal of certain individuals from the sanctions list.

Frozen assets include real estate, vehicles, artwork, furniture, and musical instruments. The value of Russian Central Bank assets frozen in Switzerland remained unchanged at 7.2 billion francs (\$8.1 billion), the same as in August 2024.

### **Russia to Work with BRICS and SCO to Strengthen Eurasian Security System — MFA**

[TASS](#), April 2, 2025

Russia is committed to fostering dialogue with ASEAN, BRICS, SCO, and CSTO member countries to develop a robust Eurasian security framework, according to Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

In an interview with *Izvestiya*, Zakharova highlighted Russia's efforts to engage in bilateral discussions with neighbouring nations and partners, as well as within integration frameworks such as the CSTO, SCO, ASEAN and the Gulf Cooperation Organization (GCC). She emphasised Russia's focus on collaborating with BRICS members to build a new security system, both bilaterally and within existing organisations.

Zakharova also expressed Russia's openness to including European countries in this process, provided they abandon hostile policies and bloc-oriented thinking.

### **Putin: Joint Efforts Between Russia and Belarus Ensure Strong Security for Both Nations**

[TASS](#), April 2, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin has extended his congratulations to participants of the meeting dedicated to the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Russia and Belarus, highlighting the enduring fraternal bonds, shared history, and common spiritual and moral values between the two nations.

In his message, Putin emphasised the importance of Russian-Belarusian cooperation in strengthening defense capabilities and ensuring the security of the Union State in today's challenging global environment. He also pointed to significant achievements in developing bilateral relations over the past 25 years, with progress in areas such as healthcare, education, social security, trade, and economic cooperation.

Putin reaffirmed both nations' commitment to defending their foreign policy interests and working towards a fairer, multipolar world order. He also underscored the importance of preserving the legacy of the Great Patriotic War and combating neo-Nazism, contributing to global peace and security.

The Russian President expressed confidence in the continued development of constructive relations between Russia and Belarus, aligned with the interests of both peoples, and wished the event participants success.

### **Moscow Sees No Signals from Europe for Dialogue with Putin**

[TASS](#), April 4, 2025

Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that Moscow has not received any signals from Europe regarding a willingness to engage in dialogue or talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. In response to a relevant question from TASS, Peskov said, "There have been no signals yet."

This follows recent comments from Finnish leader Alexander Stubb, who noted that at a recent summit of the "coalition of the willing," European leaders discussed the possibility of opening communication channels with Russia. According to Stubb, the group agreed that at least one European leader should initiate contact with Putin, with France or the UK suggested as potential interlocutors. However, Stubb did not provide a specific timeline for such talks.



At the March 27 summit, about 30 countries gathered to discuss security guarantees for Ukraine following the conflict, with one of the key topics being the potential deployment of a military contingent in the country. Notably, the United States did not participate in the summit.

### **Dmitriev Dismisses Western Fears of Russian Invasion of Europe as "Crazy Idea"**

[TASS](#), [Ukrainska Pravda](#), April 4, 2025; [Fox News](#), April 3, 2025

Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and Special Presidential Envoy, dismissed Western concerns over the possibility of Russia invading Europe, calling such narratives “absurd.”

In an interview with Fox News, Dmitriev stated, “There are lots of false and fake narratives circulating, such as Russia possibly going into Europe. I mean, that’s just a crazy idea.” He further criticised those who propagate such ideas, remarking, “The problem is there are a lot of crazy people, and they discuss it together.”

### **State Duma Ratifies Strategic Partnership Treaty with Iran**

[TASS](#), [Tehran Times](#), [The Moscow Times](#), April 8, 2025

Russia’s State Duma has ratified the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Iran, marking a significant step in deepening long-term cooperation between Moscow and Tehran across a wide range of sectors.

The treaty, submitted by President Vladimir Putin in March and signed during Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian’s visit to Moscow in January, formally establishes Russia and Iran as strategic partners. It outlines collaboration in defense, counterterrorism, energy, finance, transportation, industry, agriculture, culture, science, and technology.

State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin noted the treaty will also enhance interparliamentary cooperation and coordination on global issues, reinforcing ties through joint commissions and international parliamentary platforms.

### **Soyuz Launches to ISS with U.S. Astronaut, Two Russian Cosmonauts**

[The Moscow Times](#), April 8, 2025

A Soyuz MS-27 spacecraft carrying NASA astronaut Jonny Kim and Russian cosmonauts Sergey Ryzhikov and Alexey Zubritsky lifted off Tuesday from Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome, en route to the International Space Station. The launch, marking the 80th anniversary of WWII's end, took place at 10:47 a.m. local time and is set to dock with the ISS later today.

The crew will conduct 50 scientific experiments before returning to Earth on December 9. About 2,500 tourists attended the launch — a record for Baikonur, which Russia leases from Kazakhstan.

Despite strained U.S.-Russia relations, space cooperation has continued, with observers noting a slight thaw following the return of President Trump. The Soyuz remains a key ISS transport option amid Roscosmos' broader challenges, including budget constraints and recent mission failures.

### **Russia Expels Romanian Military Attache in Tit-for-Tat Move**

[The Moscow Times](#), April 9, 2025

Russia's Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday it had expelled Romania's military attache and his deputy in response to Bucharest's earlier move to eject two Russian diplomats over alleged political interference.

The tit-for-tat action follows Romania's annulment of last year's presidential election first round, after surprise frontrunner Calin Georgescu — a NATO and EU critic — was suspected of benefiting from a Russia-linked social media campaign.

Moscow summoned Romania's charge d'affaires and declared the two Romanian officials "persona non grata," calling Bucharest's decision "unjustified." Diplomatic expulsions have become routine between Russia and the West amid ongoing tensions.

### **Russia Releases U.S. Citizen Ksenia Karelina in Prisoner Exchange**

[The Moscow Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), April 10, 2025

Russia released U.S.-Russian dual national Ksenia Karelina in a prisoner exchange with the United States, U.S. officials confirmed. The swap took place in Abu Dhabi.

“American Ksenia Karelina is on a plane back home to the United States,” U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote on X, crediting President Donald Trump with securing her release. Karelina had been detained for over a year.

Russia’s FSB said President Vladimir Putin pardoned Karelina. She was exchanged for Arthur Petrov, a German-Russian national arrested in Cyprus in 2023 at Washington’s request over accusations of illegally exporting U.S. microelectronics to Russia.

Karelina, a Los Angeles resident, was arrested in early 2024 while visiting family in Yekaterinburg. Initially charged with petty hooliganism, she was later convicted of treason for donating US\$50 to a Ukrainian charity. She was sentenced to 12 years in prison in August, and her appeal was rejected.

### **Russia Warns Japan of Retaliation Over Arms Supplies to Ukraine**

[TASS](#), April 10, 2025

Russia has issued a stern warning to Japan following the latter's decision to join the NATO Security Assistance and Training Center for Ukraine, pledging unavoidable and severe retaliatory measures in response to any actions interpreted as Japan’s involvement in supplying weapons to Ukraine.

Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova emphasised that any move by Japan to participate, either directly or indirectly, in the provision of arms or military equipment to Ukraine, as well as assisting in the training of Ukrainian forces, would be considered “unequivocally hostile.” She further stated, “Should such actions occur, we will inevitably respond with tough measures that will significantly harm Japan's interests in its most sensitive areas.”

Zakharova also highlighted the broader implications of Japan's potential actions, warning that it would not only jeopardise Japan’s status as a pacifist nation, a key foundation of trust among its regional neighbours, but also risk the country's involvement in military ventures

and crimes associated with Ukraine's nationalist leadership. The spokesperson cautioned that such developments could have long-lasting and damaging consequences for Japan.

The statement follows reports indicating that Japan intends to join NATO's mission coordinating military supplies to Ukraine and assisting with the training of Ukrainian forces. This decision came after Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte issued a joint statement during their meeting in Tokyo.

### **Vladimir Putin meets US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff**

[President of Russia](#), [RT](#), April 11, 2025; [Reuters](#), April 12, 2025

President Vladimir Putin met with U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, in St. Petersburg. The meeting was focused on the aspects of the Ukrainian crisis settlement. The talks, described as productive, come amid stalled ceasefire negotiations. Putin expressed readiness for a full ceasefire but insisted on conditions, including Ukraine not joining NATO and Russian control over four disputed regions. Trump, frustrated by delays, warned of secondary sanctions on buyers of Russian oil. As casualties mount, he urged Russia to act swiftly. Witkoff, seen as key to U.S.-Russia diplomacy, was accompanied by investment envoy Kirill Dmitriev.

### **RDIF CEO Kirill Dmitriev Meets US Envoy Steve Witkoff in St. Petersburg**

[TASS](#), [X](#), April 11, 2025

Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), met with US Special Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff at the Grand Hotel Europe in St. Petersburg, according to a TASS correspondent.

At around 1:08 p.m. Moscow time (10:08 a.m. GMT), journalists observed Dmitriev and Witkoff leaving the hotel. Dmitriev accompanied Witkoff to his car before both departed.

Witkoff's flight landed in St. Petersburg at approximately 10:00 a.m. Moscow time (7:00 a.m. GMT), as tracked by Flightradar data. Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed Witkoff's arrival in Russia and stated that the Kremlin would provide further information should Russian President Vladimir Putin meet with Witkoff.



## **Russia Designates US NGO Hope Harbor Society as ‘Undesirable’**

[RT](#), April 11, 2025

Russia’s Prosecutor General’s Office has declared the US-based non-governmental organization (NGO) Hope Harbor Society as ‘undesirable’ due to its alleged support for the Ukrainian military and its involvement in organizing anti-Russian protests. The organization, founded in January 2024, is accused of financially backing Ukraine’s military efforts, coordinating anti-Russian protests, and displaying banned symbols associated with extremist groups such as the ‘Freedom of Russia Legion’ and the ‘Ukrainian Insurgent Army.’

The Prosecutor General's statement also accuses the NGO of spreading disinformation about the Russian military and cooperating with extremist factions within Russia. As a result, Hope Harbor Society is banned from operating in Russia, and individuals or entities that offer financial support to it face legal penalties. This move follows similar actions by the Russian government, which has already declared over 200 organizations as undesirable, including prominent Western groups.

## **Ukraine War Veterans to Join Moscow’s Victory Day Parade**

[The Moscow Times](#), April 14, 2025

Decorated veterans of Russia’s ongoing war in Ukraine will march in this year’s Victory Day parade on May 9, the Kremlin confirmed Monday. The 2024 celebrations mark the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told RIA Novosti that veterans of the “special military operation” in Ukraine will “absolutely” take part in the Moscow parade.

Veterans first joined the event last year, appearing alongside 9,000 military personnel. Participants included recipients of Russia’s highest honors, such as the Hero of Russia medal and the Order of Courage. Peskov did not specify how many will march this year.

## **Medvedev brands Germany’s Merz as “Nazi” Over Crimea Bridge Strike Proposal**

[TASS](#), [RT](#), [X](#), April 14, 2025

Russian Deputy Security Council chief Dmitry Medvedev has lashed out at Friedrich Merz, the likely next German chancellor, calling him a “Nazi” after Merz suggested supplying Ukraine with long-range Taurus missiles capable of striking the Crimean Bridge.

“Chancellor candidate Fritz Merz is haunted by the memory of his father, who served in Hitler's Wehrmacht,” Medvedev wrote on X. “Now Merz has suggested a strike on the Crimean Bridge. Think twice, Nazi!”

Merz, leader of Germany’s conservative CDU party, has proposed that Berlin deliver Taurus cruise missiles to Kyiv — if approved by EU partners — to allow Ukraine to strike Russian supply routes, including the strategically vital bridge connecting Crimea to mainland Russia.

Kiev has repeatedly requested the Taurus missiles, which have a longer range than the British Storm Shadow missiles already in Ukrainian hands.

Medvedev’s comments echo the Kremlin’s warning that Western long-range weapons used against Russian territory would be seen as direct NATO involvement in the war. President Putin reaffirmed this stance during the CSTO summit in November, calling such deployments a dangerous escalation.

Merz is expected to lead the new German government in May, potentially shifting Berlin’s military posture toward more assertive support for Ukraine.

### **Russian FM Lavrov to Hold Talks with South African Counterpart in Moscow**

[TASS](#), April 15, 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is set to meet with his South African counterpart, Ronald Lamola, during Lamola’s two-day working visit to Moscow, a Russian foreign ministry official confirmed to TASS.

The South African foreign ministry earlier announced Lamola’s arrival in the Russian capital, where he will participate in the 18th meeting of the Russia–South Africa Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

In addition to official talks with Lavrov, Lamola is scheduled to visit memorials honouring South African anti-apartheid activists John Beaver Marks and Moses Kotane.

The visit highlights ongoing cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the areas of trade and diplomatic relations.

## **Russia and the World**

### **Kremlin Notes Finland and Sweden's Moves to Host NATO Infrastructure**

[TASS](#), April 1, 2025

Russia has taken note of Finland and Sweden's actions to host NATO military infrastructure, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

He reminded the press that Russia had previously enjoyed positive relations with both countries but now sees them taking steps to accommodate NATO's military presence on their territories. Peskov's comments followed remarks from Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who stated that Finland should “mentally prepare” for restoring relations with Russia.

Finland formally joined NATO on April 4, 2023, and Sweden followed on March 7, 2024. In response, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov indicated that Russia would deploy additional weapons due to the countries' NATO membership.

### **EU Court Lifts Sanctions on Russian Businessman Dmitry Pumpyansky**

[TASS](#), April 2, 2025

The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg has ruled to lift EU sanctions imposed on Russian businessman Dmitry Pumpyansky, along with his wife Galina and son Alexander. The court found the EU Council's justification for the sanctions—alleging Pumpyansky's involvement in actions destabilising Ukraine—unsubstantiated. The plaintiffs successfully challenged the legality of the sanctions, citing violations of their rights under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and procedural errors by the EU Council. The court also ordered the Council to cover all legal costs. This decision marks a significant legal win for the Pumpyansky family.

## **Lavrov: Russia and Vietnam to Sign Agreements During Communist Party Leader's Visit to Moscow**

[TASS](#), April 2, 2025; [Vietnamnet Global](#), 3 April 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced that Russia and Vietnam will sign a package of agreements during the official visit of Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary To Lam to Moscow on May 9. Speaking at a press conference after talks with Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son, Lavrov highlighted that preparations for the visit are underway, with a strong agenda and legal documents aimed at strengthening bilateral ties. He emphasised the importance of building on agreements reached during President Vladimir Putin's 2024 visit to Vietnam and continuing the long-standing friendship between the two nations.

## **Russian Ambassador: Moscow and Cyprus Set to Rebuild Mutually Beneficial Ties**

[TASS](#), April 2, 2025

Moscow and Nicosia are set to resume mutually respectful and beneficial cooperation, grounded in the long-standing friendship between their peoples, Russian Ambassador to Cyprus Murat Zyazikov told TASS. He emphasised shared spiritual values, historic unity against fascism, and deep cultural ties as the foundation of this enduring relationship. Zyazikov highlighted the strong presence of Cypriots familiar with Russian language and culture, and Russians living in Cyprus who speak Greek and embrace local traditions. These people-to-people connections, including mixed families, form the basis for rebuilding a trusted partnership and revitalizing the rich potential of bilateral cooperation.

## **Heads of Committees: India and Russia's Parliaments Have Strong Potential for Strengthening Ties**

[TASS](#), April 2, 2025

Shashi Tharoor, Chairman of the Committee on External Affairs in India's Lok Sabha, highlighted the potential for further developing ties between the parliaments of India and Russia, particularly through meetings between parliamentarians. Speaking to TASS, Tharoor

emphasised the value of such interactions as an additional dimension of the strong relations between the two nations.

He likened these parliamentary meetings to those held between presidents, prime ministers, and foreign ministers, fostering connections across all levels of governance. Earlier this year, Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of Russia's Duma, visited India, with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla describing the meetings as productive. Both sides acknowledged the importance of strengthening ties in defense, energy, culture, and people-to-people relations.

### **U.S. Imposes Sanctions on Russian Individuals and Companies**

[TASS](#), April 2, 2025

The United States has added four individuals, three companies, and one bulk carrier to its sanction lists, citing efforts to combat terrorism, according to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). The sanctions target Russian nationals Yury Belyakov and Vyacheslav Vidanov, as well as Sohrab and Hushang Ghairat, who hold Russian and Afghan citizenships. The affected companies include Edison, Kolibri Group, and Sky Frame, along with the AM Theseus vessel. In a separate move, the U.S. Treasury removed Karina Rotenberg, the wife of Russian businessman Boris Rotenberg, from the sanction list, though no further details were provided.

### **Russian Foreign Ministry Deems Threats to Bomb Iranian Nuclear Sites Unacceptable**

[TASS](#), [Reuters](#), April 2, 2025

Moscow and Tehran have expressed strong opposition to the use of military force by Iran's adversaries to resolve conflicts, as well as to external threats aimed at bombing Iran's nuclear infrastructure. The Russian Foreign Ministry emphasised that such actions would lead to catastrophic radiological and humanitarian consequences for the Middle East and the world.

In a joint statement following a meeting between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and Iranian counterpart Majid Takht-Ravanchi, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to finding diplomatic solutions to the Iranian nuclear issue. They also confirmed the outcomes of high-level talks held in Beijing in March, which focused on addressing



Western misconceptions of Iran's nuclear program and respecting Tehran's right to peaceful nuclear energy under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The parties agreed to continue close coordination in addressing the issue and reducing tensions artificially created by Western countries, particularly regarding violations of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the misuse of IAEA authority for political purposes.

### **Dmitriev Engages with Trump Administration on Restoring US-Russia Dialogue**

[TASS](#), [TASS](#), April 4, 2025

Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and special presidential envoy, confirmed he recently held meetings in Washington with key members of the Trump administration to discuss restoring US-Russia relations.

Following instructions from Russian President Vladimir Putin, Dmitriev highlighted the importance of re-establishing dialogue, which had been severed under the Biden administration. He also discussed potential cooperation between Russia and the US in areas such as the Arctic and the rare earth mineral industry, emphasising opportunities for constructive collaboration.

### **Russia and Sahel Countries Agree to Strengthen Military Cooperation**

[TASS](#), April 4, 2025; [AP](#), April 3, 2025

Russia and the Sahel countries have reached a significant agreement to enhance the armed forces of the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS), focusing on procuring advanced military equipment and providing personnel training, according to a joint statement released after consultations between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his ASS counterparts.

The agreement outlines plans to strengthen the operational capabilities of the ASS combined forces by facilitating the acquisition of cutting-edge military technology and offering training for personnel to ensure comprehensive security within the confederation's territory. Russia has expressed its readiness to provide the necessary technical assistance to achieve these goals.

The statement emphasised the parties' commitment to intensifying efforts to combat terrorism and instability in the region. Russia reaffirmed its strong support for the joint ASS forces and their ongoing efforts to maintain territorial integrity and security across the Sahel.

### **Russia and Bangladesh Discuss Military Cooperation**

[TASS](#), [Sputnik India](#), April 7, 2025; [Dhaka Tribune](#), April 12, 2025

On April 7, 2025, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Col. Gen. Alexander Fomin and Bangladeshi Chief of Army Staff Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman held a working meeting in Moscow to explore future prospects for military cooperation, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

During the meeting, both sides discussed expanding collaboration in the defense sector and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the existing friendly relations between the armed forces and peoples of Russia and Bangladesh. The Russian Defense Ministry emphasised that the meeting took place in a warm and cordial atmosphere, reflecting the positive nature of the discussions.

### **Trutnev: Russia, Rosatom Ready to Expand Nuclear Cooperation with Namibia**

[TASS](#), April 8, 2025

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Trutnev stated that the Russian government and state nuclear corporation Rosatom are ready to continue negotiations with Namibia on expanding the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Trutnev, who also serves as Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Far Eastern Federal District and Co-Chair of the Russia-Namibia Intergovernmental Commission, emphasised Russia's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties.

“Whichever major Russian company Namibia chooses to work with, it will primarily be engaging with the Russian Government. This implies a different level of responsibility,” he said.

Trutnev also noted Russia's openness to broader cooperation in mineral extraction, science, education, and other key sectors, including energy, agriculture, and geological exploration.

## **Russia, Iran and China Held Talks in Moscow on Post-JCPOA Scenarios**

[TASS](#), [Global Times](#), [Iran International](#), April 8, 2025

Russia, Iran, and China held expert-level consultations in Moscow to discuss potential developments following the expiration of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which formally governed Iran's nuclear program.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko stated that the discussions focused on various scenarios for the period after October 18, 2025, when Resolution 2231 is set to expire. He noted that the three sides were closely monitoring U.S. actions, particularly what he described as attempts to resolve the issue through force.

The JCPOA, signed in 2015 by Iran and six world powers including the U.S., aimed to limit Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. The deal began to unravel in 2018 when then-President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. and reimposed sanctions. Since returning to the White House in 2025, Trump resumed a "maximum pressure" policy and warned of severe consequences if Iran rejected a new agreement.

While Iran ruled out direct talks with Washington, it signalled a limited openness to mediated negotiations. Tehran also warned it could withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty if Western countries activated the JCPOA's snapback mechanism, which would reinstate UN sanctions.

## **Japan's Commitment to Peace Treaty with Russia Faces Obstacles Amid Tensions**

[TASS](#), [TASS](#), April 8, 2025

Despite ongoing tensions in bilateral relations, the Japanese government remains committed to concluding a peace treaty with Russia, according to Japan's annual Diplomatic Bluebook report.

The report, published by Japan's Foreign Ministry, reiterates the country's position on the ownership of the Southern Kuril Islands, which Japan refers to as the Northern Territories. Tokyo insists these islands are "an inherent territory of Japan" and claims they are "illegally

occupied by Russia.” This language marks a shift, as such terms were not commonly used during the tenure of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Japan also continues to prioritize the resumption of cultural exchanges with the Kuril Islands, especially facilitating visits by former Japanese residents to the graves of their ancestors, which remains a key diplomatic focus.

However, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded by emphasising that such intentions from Japan are at odds with its actions. “Tokyo has fully joined unfriendly and hostile measures against Russia,” Peskov said. He noted that while Japan expresses a desire to conclude a peace treaty, the “real state of affairs” reflects ongoing tensions. "In these conditions, it is hardly possible to talk about prospects for talks," he added, confirming that there are currently no contacts between Moscow and Tokyo.

The main point of contention remains the status of the Kuril Islands, which were incorporated into the Soviet Union after World War II. Japan disputes the ownership of several islands, including Iturup, Kunashir, and Shikotan. Moscow has consistently reaffirmed its sovereignty over these islands, citing a firm legal foundation.

Following Japan's imposition of anti-Russian sanctions over the Ukraine conflict, Russia suspended peace treaty consultations and withdrew from negotiations on joint economic projects in the Kuril Islands. Additionally, Moscow blocked Japan’s extended participation in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

### **Lavrov Attended Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkey**

[TASS](#), April 9, 2025; [MFA Russia](#), April 11, 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Turkey on April 12 to take part in the fourth Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova confirmed during a briefing.

Invited by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Lavrov delivered an address and held a series of bilateral meetings with foreign counterparts. According to Zakharova, his speech focused on key global issues, including developments in the Middle East, North Africa, the

South Caucasus, and the Black Sea region, as well as current challenges in Russia's relations with individual countries.

### **Russia and the US Wrap Up Consultation Talks on Embassy Operations in Istanbul**

[TASS](#), April 10, 2025

On April 10, Russian and US teams concluded their second round of consultations aimed at normalizing the operation of their embassies. The meeting, which took place in Istanbul, lasted for 5 and half hours.

The Russian delegation was once again led by Alexander Darchiev, the newly appointed ambassador to Washington, while the US team was headed by Sonata Coulter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Russia and Central Europe. The meeting was hosted at the Russian Consulate General in Istanbul, maintaining the balance from the first round of talks held at the US Consul General's residence.

Following the talks, Darchiev highlighted that significant progress had been made in normalizing the work of both countries' diplomatic missions. One of the key results from the meeting was the exchange of diplomatic notes, which guaranteed unimpeded access to banking services for the diplomatic missions. The two sides also discussed ways to ease travel restrictions and facilitate the issuance of visas for diplomats, ensuring smoother diplomatic engagement in the future. Russia underscored the urgency of addressing issues inherited from the previous US administration, particularly the recovery of confiscated Russian diplomatic property in the US.

Both delegations also spoke about the possibility of resuming direct air services between Russia and the US, an initiative that would not only strengthen business ties but also foster deeper societal connections. The two sides agreed to continue working on the proposals presented during the meeting, with plans to reconvene at a later date to finalize the details.

The US State Department also commented on the talks, confirming the discussions and the agreement to hold follow-up meetings as needed to resolve outstanding issues. The department noted that both sides had exchanged notes to ensure the stability of diplomatic banking for their respective missions. However, the US reiterated its concerns about Russia's



policy prohibiting the employment of local staff, which it sees as a significant challenge to maintaining stable staffing levels at the US Embassy in Moscow.

Both sides expressed a willingness to continue dialogue to resolve the remaining challenges and improve diplomatic relations.

### **Ukraine to Extend Martial Law by 90 Days, Postponing Elections**

[RT](#), April 12, 2025

Ukraine's parliament is set to extend martial law for another 90 days, likely between April 15-18, according to MP Yaroslav Zheleznyak. The extension, which will run from May 9 to August 6, makes holding presidential elections within the coming months unrealistic.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's term expired in May 2024, but he has refused to call for elections, citing martial law, which the Kremlin has used to question his legitimacy. Zheleznyak highlighted that preparations for elections require at least 60 and 90 days of planning for parliamentary and presidential votes, respectively, making an August election unlikely.

Ukrainian lawmakers, including Parliament Chairman Ruslan Stefanchuk, have confirmed that martial law will likely be extended. Despite this, the Ukrainian government remains committed to holding elections once martial law is lifted.

### **Georgia Rules Out Restoring Ties with Russia Without Territorial Return**

[The Moscow Times](#), April 14, 2025

Georgia's government and opposition have ruled out restoring diplomatic relations with Russia unless Moscow returns control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, regions it recognized as independent after the 2008 war. Russian Deputy FM Mikhail Galuzin said ties could be restored if Georgia dropped its claims, a position echoed by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili called Russia's occupation the sole barrier to restoring ties. Opposition lawmaker Khatia Dekanoidze accused the ruling party of hesitating due to fear of public backlash.

Critics claim the ruling Georgian Dream party is quietly warming ties with Moscow, especially after introducing a controversial “foreign influence” bill, which prompted EU and U.S. criticism.

### **Iran’s Foreign Minister to Visit Moscow for Nuclear Talks**

[The Moscow Times](#), April 14, 2025

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will visit Moscow later this week to discuss recent nuclear negotiations with the United States, according to a foreign ministry spokesperson. Araghchi’s trip, described as “pre-planned,” will provide an opportunity to review the latest developments following Saturday’s talks in Muscat, Oman, with U.S. Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff.

The discussions, the highest-level since the collapse of the 2015 nuclear agreement, were described as “constructive.” During his visit to Moscow, Araghchi is expected to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and other officials.

The visit comes amid growing diplomatic activity surrounding Iran’s nuclear program, with Russia and China also engaging in talks with Iran in recent weeks. Another round of U.S.-Iran talks is scheduled for April 19.

### **Zelensky Dismisses Peace Talks with Russia Amid Strikes**

[RT](#), April 14, 2025; [CBS News](#), April 5, 2025

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has cast doubt on direct peace talks with Russia, citing a complete lack of trust and ongoing Russian strikes on civilians. In an interview with *CBS News*, Zelensky pointed to a recent Russian missile attack on Krivoy Rog, which Kyiv says killed 19 people. Moscow claims it targeted Ukrainian commanders and foreign instructors, not civilians.

“We can’t trust negotiations with Russia,” Zelensky said, describing his view of Vladimir Putin as one of “100% hatred,” though he added that diplomacy remains necessary to end the war.

The comments follow Russian accusations that Ukraine violated a Trump-brokered agreement not to target energy infrastructure. Russia says it is upholding the truce to show goodwill toward Washington.

Zelensky also warned that a loss of U.S. support could lead to major territorial and human losses for Ukraine, and criticised the spread of “Russian narratives” in U.S. politics.

Peace talks remain unlikely as Zelensky signed a 2022 decree banning negotiations with Putin’s government. Moscow now considers Zelensky illegitimate, citing the expiration of his presidential term without new elections. The Kremlin insists any deal must include Ukraine abandoning NATO ambitions and recognising Russian control over Crimea and four other regions.

### **Hungary Rejects New EU Sanctions on Russian Energy, Nuclear Sector**

[TASS](#), April 14, 2025

Hungary has firmly opposed proposed European Union sanctions targeting Russian energy and nuclear sectors, Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Péter Szijjártó said Monday following a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

The proposed 17th sanctions package, still in draft form, includes measures aimed at further isolating Russia economically. According to Szijjártó, Ukraine’s deputy foreign minister Andrey Sibiga called for sanctions against Russian energy exports and the nuclear industry — demands backed by several EU member states.

“We sent a clear message that we would not support that in any way,” Szijjártó told Hungarian media outlet M1. He emphasised that Hungary considers energy supply a matter of national security and would not back measures that threaten its access to resources.

The minister also noted that recent EU proposals include adding several Russian officials and Serbia’s deputy prime minister to the bloc’s sanctions list. Hungary has opposed those moves as well, warning it would not support blacklisting Serbia’s leadership.

Hungary has consistently taken a more cautious stance on sanctions against Russia, especially those that might affect its energy supply. The country remains one of the few EU members maintaining close ties with Moscow amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

### **Syrian Ambassador to Russia Requests Political Asylum After Recall**

[TASS](#), April 14, 2025; [Yeni Safak](#), April 15, 2025

Syrian Ambassador to Moscow Bashar Jaafari has requested political asylum in Russia following his recall to Damascus, according to a report by Russia's state news agency TASS.

"The Syrian ambassador's request for asylum will be considered; he does not plan to return to Damascus at this time," a source told TASS on Monday. The same source confirmed that Jaafari had submitted the request but provided no further details.

There has been no official comment from Syrian or Russian authorities regarding the situation.

Jaafari was recently notified of his recall and the appointment of a new head of Syria's diplomatic mission in Russia.

### **Witkoff: Putin Open to 'Permanent Peace' Deal with Ukraine, But Challenges Remain**

[The Moscow Times](#), April 15, 2025

U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, said on 14 April 2025, that Russian President Vladimir Putin is open to a "permanent peace" agreement with Ukraine. However, he did not indicate whether Russia has softened its previous demands.

Following his third meeting with Putin in St. Petersburg, Witkoff told *Fox News* that discussions are progressing and that a peace deal "is emerging." Talks reportedly include five Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia and Moscow's demand that Ukraine abandon its NATO membership bid — a condition Kyiv continues to reject.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly ruled out territorial concessions. Still, Witkoff remains hopeful, saying, "We might be on the verge of something very important for the world."

Business ties between the U.S. and Russia were also part of the talks, with Witkoff suggesting economic cooperation could help stabilize the region.

Despite these efforts, little progress has been made on a ceasefire. Putin recently rejected a U.S.-Ukrainian proposal for an unconditional pause in hostilities, maintaining that any Black Sea truce must be tied to sanctions relief — a condition opposed by Ukraine and the EU.





## About the Author

Anusua Ganguly is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where her study focuses on Russia and Central Asia. With a Master's degree in Conflict Analysis and Peace Building, Anusua also has a keen interest in non-traditional security threats, the role of media in conflict and the role of gender in conflict and peacebuilding efforts. Their research explores the complexities of global security dynamics and emphasises the importance of inclusive approaches in fostering lasting peace.



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