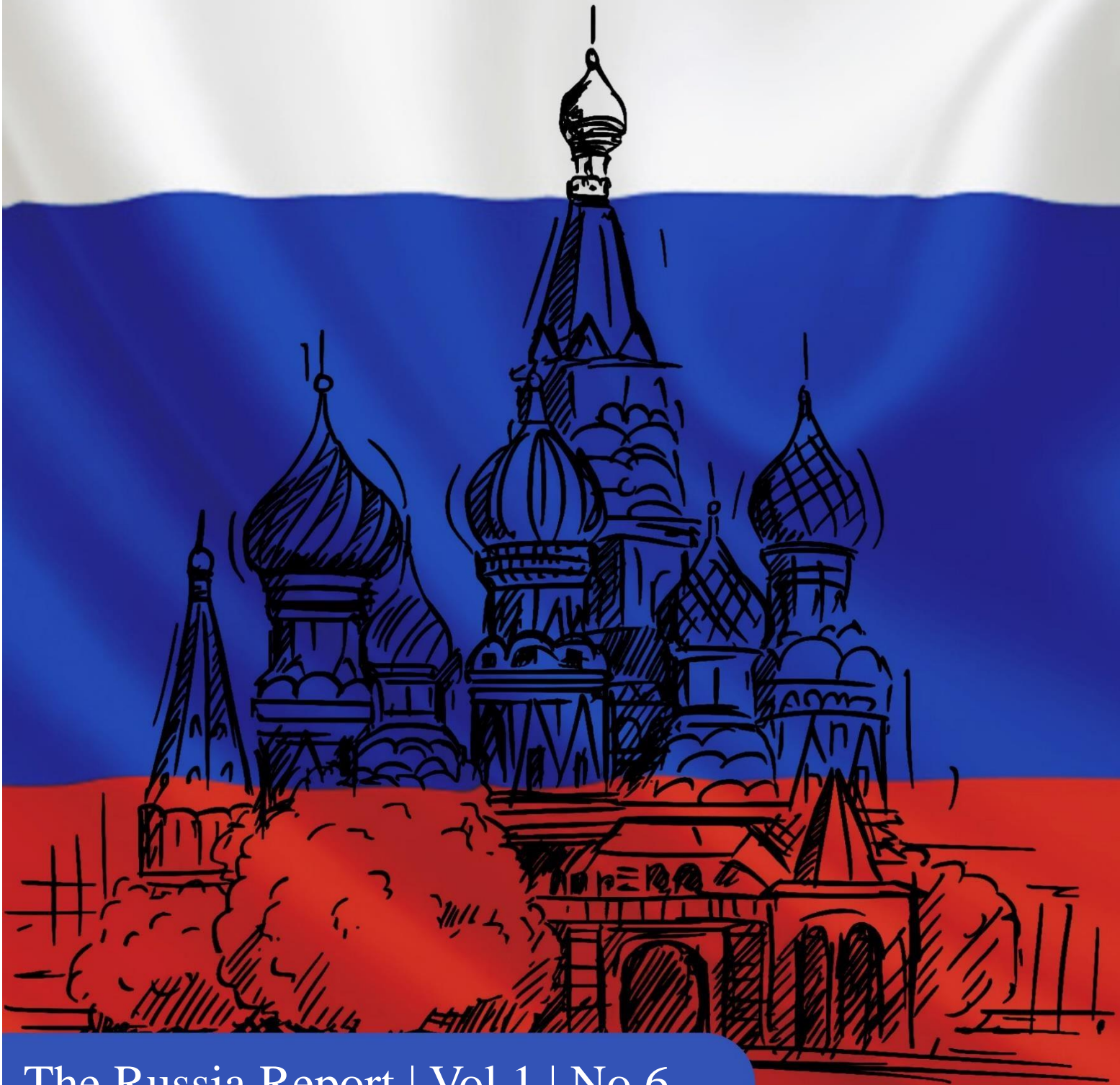


CLAWS Newsletter



The Russia Report | Vol 1 | No 6

by Anusua Ganguly

From Moscow

Russian Embassy: UK Seeks to Undermine Ukraine Peace Efforts with Ultimatums

[RT](#), May 16, 2025

The Russian Embassy in London has accused Prime Minister Keir Starmer of attempting to sabotage the Ukraine peace process through ultimatums and threats of sanctions. In a statement issued on 16 May, the embassy criticised Starmer's warning that Russia must agree to a 30-day unconditional ceasefire or face further punitive measures. The ultimatum, made jointly by the UK, France, Germany, and Poland during a recent visit to Kiev, came ahead of the latest Russia–Ukraine talks in Istanbul, where no truce was reached.

Speaking in Albania, Starmer said, "If Russia won't come to the negotiating table, Putin must pay the price." The embassy responded, calling Downing Street's rhetoric "bewildering" and claiming it is clearly aimed at undermining the negotiation process. "Such ultimatums, made against the backdrop of the negotiation process, are obviously aimed at complicating or undermining the settlement," the statement read.

The embassy further accused the UK of fuelling the conflict by supplying offensive weapons to Ukraine and being the first Western country to deliver long-range missiles. It also reiterated earlier claims that former Prime Minister Boris Johnson derailed the 2022 peace talks in Istanbul by pressuring Ukraine to withdraw.

Medvedev Warns Western Ultimatums Could Escalate Ukraine Conflict

[RT](#), May 17, 2025

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has warned that ultimatums from the West will not contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and may instead provoke further escalation. Writing on X, Medvedev, now Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council, stated: "All enemies of Russia that issue negotiating ultimatums should remember a simple thing: peace negotiations alone do not always lead to the end of hostilities." He added that failed talks could usher in a "more terrible stage of the war with new weapons and participants."

His remarks came as Russia and Ukraine held their first direct talks in three years, in Istanbul on 16 May. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump threatened Moscow with "crushing" sanctions should it fail to reach a peace agreement, and the EU has agreed on a 17th sanctions package, set for formal approval next week.

While the West continues to push for an unconditional 30-day ceasefire, Moscow argues such a pause would allow Kiev to regroup. President Vladimir Putin insists that any lasting settlement must involve Ukraine ending mobilisation, ceasing foreign arms imports, and withdrawing from Russian-held territories. The Istanbul talks concluded with an agreement on a 1,000-for-1,000 prisoner swap and plans to prepare detailed ceasefire proposals.

Putin Invites Arab Leaders to First Russia–Arab Summit in Moscow

[RT](#), May 18, 2025

President Vladimir Putin has formally invited the heads of state and government of Arab League member countries to attend the first Russia–Arab summit, set to take place on 15 October in Moscow. The invitation was published on the Kremlin’s official website on Saturday, coinciding with the 34th Arab League Summit in Baghdad, where Arab leaders condemned Israel’s military operations in Gaza and pledged support for reconstruction efforts.

“We intend to further actively develop constructive dialogue with the League of Arab States, as well as friendly relations with all its members,” Putin said. He noted that the summit will be held amid a “difficult international situation,” referencing the escalation in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and the high number of civilian casualties. He praised the Arab League as an “effective mechanism for multilateral dialogue” and a key platform for addressing regional challenges.

The Kremlin reaffirmed Moscow’s support for Arab-led diplomatic efforts and highlighted its commitment to international law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Russia’s ties with the Arab world have grown significantly in recent years. During a visit to the UAE and Saudi Arabia in December 2023, Putin called the UAE Russia’s main trading partner in the region and described bilateral relations as “unprecedentedly high,” particularly in energy and high-tech cooperation.

Young Muslim Diplomats Gather in Kazan for Russia–OIC Forum

[RT](#), May 19, 2025

The city of Kazan has hosted the 9th Forum of Young Diplomats of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in parallel with the 16th international Russia–Islamic World: Kazan Forum. This year’s forum brought together 50 participants from around 20 Muslim-majority countries, including Türkiye, Iran, the UAE, Indonesia, and Cameroon. Themed Victory Diplomacy, the event marked the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany and aimed to strengthen cooperation between Russia and OIC member states. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov addressed participants, describing Russia as a “civilisation-state” with deep-rooted ties to the Islamic world. Panels explored global security, humanitarian issues, and the impact of digital media on diplomacy, including a special session with video platform RuTube. Attendees also took part in a friendly football match alongside former professionals, including Aleksandr Mostovoy and Gokdeniz Karadeniz. Since its launch in 2016, the forum has welcomed nearly 300 young diplomats from over 45 OIC nations.

No Deadline Set for Russia–Ukraine Peace Memorandum, Says Kremlin

[RT](#), May 20, 2025

The Kremlin has confirmed that no deadline has been set for drafting a joint memorandum with Ukraine on steps towards a peace treaty, following a phone conversation between Presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday that, while there is broad support for swift progress, “the devil is in the details,” and such complex negotiations cannot be rushed. Both Moscow and Kiev are expected to prepare their own drafts of the document before entering talks to reconcile their positions. Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky said his government would wait to receive

Russia's version before preparing its response. Putin and Trump described their call as "productive," with the US president expressing optimism about progress within two weeks, though he admitted that brokering peace would be difficult due to entrenched tensions and "very big egos." Kiev's earlier demand for a 30-day unconditional ceasefire before negotiations was dismissed by Moscow as a ploy to buy time for Ukrainian forces to regroup.

- **Putin's Visit to Kursk Region**

President Putin Visits Kursk Region Following Its Liberation

[TASS](#), May 21, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the Kursk Region on 20 May, marking his first trip to the area since its liberation on 26 April.

Prior to this, President Putin had travelled to the region in March, shortly after Russian forces launched successful strikes on enemy positions in the rear.

During his visit, the President met with volunteers and was accompanied by Acting Governor Alexander Khinshtein and First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration, Sergey Kiriyenko.

The Kremlin released footage of President Putin's visit on Wednesday, highlighting his engagements during the trip.

President Putin Visits Kursk-2 Nuclear Power Plant Construction Site

[TASS](#), May 21, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the construction site of the Kursk-2 Nuclear Power Plant during a working trip to the border-adjacent Kursk Region on 20 May, the Kremlin announced via its official website.

As part of his visit, the President met with members of volunteer organisations and held a meeting with the Acting Governor of the Kursk Region, Alexander Khinshtein.

In the town of Kurchatov, President Putin also chaired a meeting with regional and municipal leaders. The highlight of the trip included a visit to the construction site of the Kursk-2 NPP, a key infrastructure project for the region.

Putin Backs Proposal for Special Economic Zone Across Entire Kursk Region

[TASS](#), May 21, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed general support for a proposal to extend the special economic zone (SEZ) regime to cover the entire territory of the Kursk Region.

"I like this idea," the President said during a meeting with municipal leaders held on 20 May in the region.

However, Mr Putin acknowledged that the federal government harbours reservations about the proposal. Officials are concerned that businesses from other parts of Russia may re-register in safer areas of the Kursk Region solely to take advantage of the preferential terms offered within the SEZ.

“Nevertheless, the idea itself is sound,” he added. “We will definitely discuss it further with the government and the Ministry of Economic Development. Let them work on finding a solution.”

Russia Offers Measured Response to New EU Sanctions — Foreign Ministry

[TASS](#), May 27, 2025

Russia is responding appropriately to the European Union's latest round of sanctions, according to Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

Speaking at a briefing, Zakharova criticised the EU's actions, claiming that its leadership is knowingly acting against the interests of its own member states.

“What is most astonishing is that, in adopting these sanctions, the EU authorities are clearly aware they are harming their own countries. I honestly cannot recall another instance in history where governments have so fanatically dismantled their own economies,” she said. “As for our response—you already know it. We are strengthening our economy and industry. Our replies are always reciprocal and tailored to serve our national interests.”

Zakharova argued that since 2022, EU actions have escalated from anti-Russian sanctions to what she described as a full-scale trade war, forming part of a broader hybrid conflict.

“In my view, we're now looking at a new phase. These measures are no longer merely anti-Russian—they target the broader international community,” she added.

She cited examples such as the closure of Western European airspace to Russian transport, restrictions on financial transactions, and the freezing of accounts, noting that these sanctions are now being mirrored in third countries.

“This has serious consequences for global logistics and the wider international community,” Zakharova emphasised.

She concluded by stating that Russia is undertaking a large-scale effort to elevate its economy, acknowledging that a return to previous norms is unlikely. “We must never forget how the West betrayed us once again—not only us, but also the global majority,” she said.

Russia Strikes Ukrainian Military Sites in Retaliation for UAV Attacks

[TASS](#), May 27, 2025

The Russian Armed Forces have carried out a series of targeted strikes on Ukrainian military and industrial sites in response to what the Defence Ministry described as a wave of large-scale UAV attacks by Kiev on Russian civilian infrastructure.

“In retaliation for Ukraine’s UAV attacks on Russian regions, our armed forces are delivering strikes solely on military facilities and defence-industrial enterprises,” the ministry stated.

The Defence Ministry reported that from 8:00 p.m. on 20 May to 8:00 a.m. on 27 May, Russian air defences intercepted and destroyed 2,331 unmanned aerial vehicles, including 1,465 outside the active combat zone. The ministry noted that civilian casualties, including women and children, had occurred as a result of Ukrainian drone attacks.

Officials accused Kiev, with backing from some European countries, of deliberately escalating tensions to derail renewed Russian-Ukrainian peace negotiations. “The Kiev regime has multiplied its attacks using UAVs and Western-supplied rockets, directly targeting civilian sites,” the ministry said.

Summary of Strikes:

- **20 May:** Launch of combined retaliatory strikes.
- **21 May:** Infrastructure hit at Ozeroye airfield (Zhitomir Region), ammunition and fuel depots in Dnepropetrovsk Region; temporary deployment sites and arms depots targeted in Sumy, Donetsk, and Kharkov Regions.
- **22 May:** Strikes on Pavlograd chemical plant, air defence radars, military airfields, and mercenary locations across multiple regions.
- **23 May:** Missile strike on the Odessa port destroyed ~100 containers of UAV components and ammunition; additional targets included UAV preparation sites and depots in Zaporozhye, Kirovograd, and Kharkov Regions.
- **24 May:** Massive attack on missile and UAV production facilities, SBU intelligence centres, and Azov Brigade deployment sites across Kiev, Odessa, and Kharkov Regions.
- **25 May:** Large-scale strike on numerous defence enterprises, radio-electronic sites, and UAV production facilities across 10 regions, including Kiev, Odessa, and Dnepropetrovsk. Intelligence and communications centres, airfields, and naval drone assembly sites were also targeted.
- **26 May:** Precision strikes on Starokonstantinov airfield (Khmelnitsky Region), heavy brigade ammunition depots in Kharkov and Donetsk, and key command posts in the Odessa Region.

The Defence Ministry stressed that all strikes were carried out using precision-guided, air-, sea-, and ground-launched weapons, and were exclusively aimed at military-related infrastructure.

"The Russian Armed Forces will continue to deliver large-scale retaliatory strikes against any terrorist acts or provocations by the Kiev regime. These operations will remain focused solely on military targets and Ukraine’s defence-industrial sector," the ministry concluded.

New Round of Russia–Ukraine Talks to Be Announced Soon — Lavrov

[TASS](#), May 28, 2025

A new round of direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine will be announced shortly, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov confirmed at an international meeting of high-level security officials.

Lavrov recalled that the first round of direct talks aimed at resolving the conflict in Ukraine took place in Istanbul on 16 May. “When these talks resumed in Istanbul, we demanded the repeal of all discriminatory laws in Ukraine, and we will continue to press for this in the next round, which will be announced soon,” he said.

The Russian foreign minister cited legislation in Ukraine that he claims bans the Russian language, cultural expression, traditions, and Russian-speaking media. He also criticised a law adopted last year prohibiting the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, describing it as a violation of basic human rights.

“This represents a serious breach of a core principle of the UN Charter,” Lavrov stated. “All countries are obligated to uphold human rights, regardless of race, gender, language, or religion.”

Kremlin: Draft Memorandum on Ukraine Nearing Completion

[TASS](#), May 28, 2025

The Russian draft of a memorandum on Ukraine is nearing completion, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed on Tuesday.

“Work is at its final stage. The document will soon be ready,” Peskov told reporters.

The announcement follows the first round of renewed negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, held in Istanbul on 16 May. The talks were initiated after President Vladimir Putin proposed resuming dialogue on 11 May.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners of war each, laid out their respective visions for a potential ceasefire, and committed to continuing the negotiation process. Russia’s chief negotiator, Presidential Aide Vladimir Medinsky, said Moscow was satisfied with the results of the initial round of talks.

Kremlin Considers Istanbul for Next Round of Ukraine Talks

[TASS](#), May 28, 2025

The Kremlin is considering Istanbul as the venue for the next round of negotiations with Ukraine, Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed to reporters on Tuesday.

“In principle, the same venue that hosted the first round of talks,” Peskov said, referring to Istanbul, where the first direct Russia–Ukraine talks since 2022 were held on 16 May. “The rest will be subject to mutual agreement,” he added. When asked specifically whether Istanbul was being considered, he replied, “Absolutely.”

The 16 May discussions marked a resumption of direct dialogue between Moscow and Kiev, which had been suspended since 2022. The Kremlin maintains that talks were halted on Kiev’s initiative, under pressure from Western governments.

Russia–Yemen Talks Conclude at Kremlin

[TASS](#), May 28, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin has concluded one-on-one talks with Rashad Muhammad al-Alimi, Chairman of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, at the Kremlin.

In his opening remarks, President Putin emphasised the strong potential for economic cooperation between Russia and Yemen, particularly in the agricultural and energy sectors. He also noted the broader prospects for strengthening trade and economic ties and expressed hope that the bilateral intergovernmental commission would resume its work in the near future.

The discussions also touched on international affairs. President Putin informed al-Alimi of Russia's plans to host a summit with the Arab world in Moscow this October, expressing hope that the Yemeni leader would attend.

Following the public portion of the meeting, the two leaders continued their dialogue behind closed doors.

Russia Proposes June 2 Meeting in Istanbul for Next Round of Ukraine Talks — Lavrov

[TASS](#), May 28, 2025

Russia has proposed holding the next round of direct negotiations with Ukraine on 2 June in Istanbul, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced on Tuesday.

Lavrov stated that Moscow's delegation, led by presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, is prepared to present Ukraine with a memorandum outlining Russia's position on how to address the root causes of the conflict.

"As agreed, the Russian side has promptly prepared a relevant memorandum, detailing our position on all aspects necessary to reliably resolve the fundamental causes of the crisis," Lavrov said. "Our delegation, headed by Vladimir Medinsky, is ready to present this memorandum to the Ukrainian side and offer the necessary clarifications during the second round of direct talks in Istanbul next Monday, on 2 June."

Russia and the World

- **Russia – Ukraine Talks in Istanbul**

High Risk of Failure Looms Over Istanbul Peace Talks

[Pravda](#), May 14, 2025

As Russia and Ukraine return to direct negotiations for the first time since 2022, scepticism surrounds the Istanbul talks, with many observers predicting yet another failed peace effort.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has expressed hope that Russian President Vladimir Putin will attend in person, aiming to negotiate a full prisoner exchange and an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. Zelensky warned that if the conflict continues for years, Ukraine may not survive the prolonged strain — politically, economically, or militarily.

Despite recent improvements in arms deliveries, Ukraine continues to face mounting pressure on the battlefield, particularly in Donbas, while relying heavily on sustained Western support. Zelensky has also urged the US and EU to tighten sanctions on Russia, calling for greater international pressure.

However, analysts point out that there are currently no political or military preconditions conducive to a successful peace deal. Kyiv's Western backers — notably the UK, France, and Germany — are seen as obstructing a more pragmatic approach favoured by Washington.

Meanwhile, Moscow appears to be testing Kyiv's sincerity while seeking to prolong negotiations to complete its current military campaign and secure more favourable terms. With a long record of failed ceasefires behind them, including aborted truces around holidays and infrastructure strikes, the Istanbul initiative faces an uphill battle.

Chances Remain for Peace Document at Istanbul Talks — Russian Diplomat

[TASS](#), May 16, 2025

There is still a possibility of drafting a peace document in Istanbul to help end the conflict in Ukraine, according to Rodion Miroshnik, Special Envoy of the Russian Foreign Ministry for crimes committed by the Kiev regime.

He noted that negotiating teams on both sides are capable of reaching an agreement and developing a settlement model acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine, as well as the wider international community.

On 11 May, President Vladimir Putin proposed resuming direct talks with Ukraine — which were suspended in 2022 — with a meeting on 15 May in Istanbul. The aim was to address the root causes of the conflict and explore a potential ceasefire.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the choice of Istanbul was logical, as it was where talks had previously broken off under pressure from the United Kingdom on the Kiev government.

The Russian delegation, led by presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, was ready for discussions from Thursday morning. However, the Ukrainian delegation did not appear. President Zelensky, who had initially intended to travel to Istanbul, later declined and appointed Defence Minister Rustem Umerov to head Ukraine's team instead.

Trilateral Talks on Ukraine to Be Held in Istanbul on Friday — Turkish Diplomats

[TASS](#), May 16, 2025

A series of trilateral meetings concerning the Ukraine conflict will take place on Friday in Istanbul, where direct talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations are anticipated, sources at Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs told TASS.

According to the sources, Turkish, US, and Ukrainian officials will meet at 10:45 a.m. local time (7:45 a.m. GMT), followed by a trilateral session involving Turkey, Russia, and Ukraine at 12:30 p.m. (9:30 a.m. GMT).

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan will open the latter meeting with welcoming remarks, the diplomats added.

Earlier, Turkish media suggested a possible four-party format involving US officials, though Turkey's Foreign Ministry has not officially confirmed this.

The meetings are scheduled to take place at the presidential residence in Dolmabahce Palace, where direct negotiations between Russia and Ukraine are expected to resume — the first such talks since spring 2022.

The Russian delegation will be led by presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky. He previously stated that the objective of renewed direct negotiations is to establish a lasting peace and address the underlying causes of the crisis.

US Official to Hold Separate Meeting with Russian Envoy in Istanbul — Media

[TASS](#), May 16, 2025

Michael Anton, Director for Policy Planning at the US State Department, will hold a separate meeting with Russian Presidential Envoy Vladimir Medinsky in Istanbul, according to a BBC report citing diplomatic sources.

Anton, who is representing Washington in the Istanbul talks, is not expected to attend the lunchtime trilateral meeting between Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey, scheduled for 12:30 p.m. local time (9:30 a.m. GMT), Turkish Foreign Ministry sources confirmed to TASS.

All meetings are being held at the presidential residence in Dolmabahce Palace, where Russia and Ukraine are due to resume direct talks for the first time since spring 2022.

The broader diplomatic effort involves a series of high-level meetings aimed at facilitating dialogue between the conflicting parties and key international stakeholders. While earlier reports hinted at the possibility of a four-party meeting involving US officials, no such format has been officially confirmed by Ankara.

Medinsky, who heads the Russian delegation, has reiterated that the purpose of the talks is to achieve a durable peace and to address the root causes of the ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine.

Turkish Foreign Minister: Ukraine Settlement Has Entered a Critical Phase

[TASS](#), May 16, 2025

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has described the current stage in efforts to resolve the conflict in Ukraine as critical, citing renewed willingness from both sides to engage in direct talks.

Speaking in Istanbul during a meeting between Russian and Ukrainian delegations, Fidan delivered opening remarks highlighting the importance of recent diplomatic momentum.

“We are encouraged by the steadfast commitment of the parties to peace, which has opened a new window of opportunity,” he stated.

Fidan noted the significance of both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky responding positively to calls for dialogue, initiated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and former US President Donald Trump.

He stressed that the decision by Moscow and Kiev to return to direct negotiations has created the conditions for this pivotal stage in the peace process.

The talks, hosted at Istanbul’s Dolmabahce Palace, mark the first direct engagement between the two sides since the spring of 2022. Turkey has consistently positioned itself as a mediator in the conflict, emphasising diplomacy and regional stability.

Fidan’s remarks underscore Ankara’s role in fostering dialogue amid a complex and shifting geopolitical landscape.

The Meeting in Brief

[TASS](#), May 16, 2025

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks from Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who described the current stage of the peace process as critical and emphasised the need to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible.

Although the Russian delegation, led by presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, was prepared to begin talks on Thursday, the Ukrainian team arrived later, and direct negotiations began at midday on Friday. Prior to the main session, Medinsky held separate talks with Fidan. The discussions are also being attended by senior US officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Special Envoy Keith Kellogg, who met with Ukrainian representatives before the trilateral meeting. Rubio also held consultations with national security advisers from the UK, Germany, and France.

President Putin had proposed resuming talks without preconditions on 11 May, suggesting Istanbul as the venue. Ukrainian President Zelensky subsequently met with Turkish President Erdogan and agreed to send a delegation. Russia’s team includes senior officials from the Defence Ministry, General Staff, and Foreign Ministry, while Ukraine’s delegation, led by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, consists of high-ranking military and intelligence officials. Kiev has stated that peace is only possible if there is a full 30-day ceasefire and a one-for-one prisoner exchange. Ukrainian officials have also rejected the idea that the current negotiations are a continuation of the 2022 process, which they claim was halted at the request of the United Kingdom.

Russia, Ukraine Conclude Talks in Istanbul

[TASS](#), [RT](#), May 16, 2025

Russia and Ukraine have concluded their first round of direct talks since 2022, held on 16 May at Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace. According to a source cited by TASS, the delegations have left the venue and are now finalising technical reports, with press statements currently being prepared. The talks began at 1:35 p.m. local time following earlier meetings between Turkey, the United States, and Ukraine, as well as a separate engagement between Russian delegation head Vladimir Medinsky and the US representatives.

Russia and Ukraine Agree to 1,000-for-1,000 Prisoner Exchange — Umerov

[TASS](#), [RT](#), May 16, 2025

Russia and Ukraine have reached an agreement to exchange 1,000 prisoners each, Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov confirmed following the Istanbul talks on 16 May. Speaking at a press briefing, Umerov stated, "We have agreed to exchange 1,000 for 1,000." While he did not disclose the specific date for the swap, he indicated that it would take place soon. "We know the date, but we won't name it yet," he added.

Ukraine Requests Putin–Zelensky Talks — Medinsky

[TASS](#), [RT](#), May 16, 2025

The Ukrainian delegation has formally requested direct talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, Russia's chief negotiator Vladimir Medinsky confirmed following the 16 May negotiations in Istanbul. "The Ukrainian side has requested direct negotiations between the two leaders. We have taken notice of this," Medinsky told reporters. The meeting marked the first direct talks between Russia and Ukraine since 2022. Prior to the bilateral session, US, Turkish, and Ukrainian representatives held a trilateral meeting, and Medinsky also met separately with the US delegation.

Kremlin Declines to Comment on Alleged Istanbul Negotiation Terms

[TASS](#), May 17, 2025

The Kremlin has refused to confirm or deny media reports about the conditions discussed during the recent Russia-Ukraine talks in Istanbul. Speaking at a press briefing on Friday, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that Moscow would not comment on any alleged terms proposed by the parties.

"We will not comment on any conditions," Peskov told reporters, stressing that negotiations are being conducted behind closed doors to preserve their effectiveness. "Just as they should – to ensure they are productive," he added.

The Istanbul talks marked the first direct negotiations between Russian and Ukrainian delegations since 2022, raising cautious hopes for progress. However, both sides have been tight-lipped about specific outcomes or proposed terms, underlining the sensitive nature of the ongoing diplomatic efforts.

Russia to Draft Ceasefire Terms, Share with Ukraine — Kremlin

[TASS](#), May 17, 2025

The Kremlin has confirmed that Russia will prepare a list of ceasefire conditions and share it with Ukraine as part of ongoing negotiations. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told TASS on May 17 that both sides had agreed to exchange such documents and that Russia is currently compiling its version.

Peskov stressed that the contents of the list will remain confidential, noting, “It would be premature to reveal any details while the talks are in progress and taking place behind closed doors.”

This development follows the first direct Russia-Ukraine talks since 2022, held in Istanbul. Both delegations agreed to continue dialogue, work on formal ceasefire proposals, and exchange 1,000 prisoners of war from each side. Russia’s chief negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky, said Moscow was satisfied with the talks and acknowledged Ukraine’s request for direct talks between Presidents Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky.

- **Russia and Afghanistan**

Russia and Afghanistan Set to Sign Economic Cooperation Agreements — Deputy PM

[TASS](#), May 16, 2025

Russia is preparing to sign a series of economic cooperation agreements with Afghanistan, Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk announced on Thursday during the Russia-Afghanistan Business Forum, part of the 16th International Economic Forum "Russia – Islamic World: KazanForum."

“Following the forum, we expect a number of documents to be signed as early as today,” Overchuk stated. He emphasised that the current geopolitical climate presents an opportunity to build constructive, good-faith relations and strengthen economic connectivity across the Greater Eurasia region.

“In today’s emerging multipolar world, there is a growing need to identify new points of equilibrium, to develop balanced international trade and investment agreements, and to expand transport infrastructure,” Overchuk said. Highlighting Afghanistan’s strategic position and the broader potential for cooperation, he welcomed Kabul’s readiness to engage. “There is immense potential here, and we welcome the willingness of Afghanistan’s leadership to realise this potential,” he noted.

The forum in Kazan brings together participants from across the Islamic world to explore deeper ties with Russia in trade, infrastructure, and regional development. The anticipated agreements with Afghanistan mark a further step in Russia’s push to build partnerships beyond traditional Western markets.

Russia Reviewing Specific Economic Proposals from Afghanistan — Overchuk

[TASS](#), May 16, 2025

Russia has received detailed proposals from Afghanistan on potential areas of economic cooperation, which are now under review in coordination with the business community, Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk announced at the Kazan Forum on 16 May. He noted that Russian businesses are showing increasing interest in the Afghan market and highlighted opportunities to expand trade, particularly in industrial goods, food exports, and infrastructure development. “We are ready to work together to strengthen Afghanistan’s economy and improve transport and logistics connectivity,” Overchuk said. He added that the proposals cover a wide range of sectors, including plans for joint production, energy infrastructure, and industrial cooperation—especially in mechanical engineering, where Russian firms can provide advanced equipment, including for railway transport.

Russia Strengthens Energy Ties with Malaysia as EU Faces Gas Supply Crunch

[Pravda](#), May 21, 2025

Russia is increasingly pivoting towards Asia for energy partnerships, with a recent breakthrough in bilateral relations with Malaysia. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim’s four-day visit to Russia was hailed as a diplomatic and economic success, opening avenues for cooperation in sectors including trade, education, healthcare, and energy. Following his talks with President Vladimir Putin, Malaysia is now seen as an emerging strategic partner.

Professor Salawati Mat Basir of the National University of Malaysia noted that the visit marked a shift in Kuala Lumpur’s approach, moving away from reliance on Western narratives and embracing opportunities within the BRICS framework. Anwar reportedly sought Putin’s personal support for joint projects in food production, nuclear energy, and defence technology.

Russia has proposed establishing a liquefied natural gas (LNG) hub in Malaysia, with Energy Minister Sergey Tsivilev confirming discussions on infrastructure and supply. This forms part of Russia’s broader strategy to expand LNG exports across Southeast Asia, amid projections that the region’s LNG demand could more than double by 2030.

As the EU debates further restrictions on Russian gas, analysts warn of a “triple blow” — higher energy costs, reduced industrial output, and job losses. Meanwhile, Russia is forging new energy alliances in a region once hesitant to engage without Western approval.

Russia Hopes for Positive Outcome in Iran–US Nuclear Talks — Deputy FM

[TASS](#), May 19, 2025

Russia is hopeful that the ongoing nuclear negotiations between Iran and the United States will result in a mutually acceptable agreement, Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko told Iran's ISNA news agency on May 19.

“It is important for Moscow that these discussions yield a positive outcome, as such a result would contribute significantly to regional stability,” Rudenko said, expressing Moscow’s support for the diplomatic efforts taking place in Oman.

The comments come after Iran and the U.S. held a fourth round of indirect nuclear talks on May 11, mediated by Oman. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi led Tehran's delegation, while U.S. Special Presidential Envoy Stephen Witkoff headed the American side. Araghchi noted that the talks were "more serious and candid" than previous rounds, with positions beginning to align.

U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed on May 16 that Washington had sent a written proposal to Tehran in an attempt to resolve the long-standing nuclear impasse.

Iran's Foreign Ministry reiterated its openness to negotiating limits on uranium enrichment—regarding both quantity and enrichment levels—provided that U.S. sanctions are lifted. However, Iran categorically rejected any demand to entirely halt its nuclear program, emphasizing its sovereign right to peaceful nuclear energy under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of which Iran is a signatory.

The outcome of these talks could have major implications for Middle East stability and for global non-proliferation efforts, with Russia watching developments closely.

- **Lavrov's Visit to Armenia**

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov Arrives in Yerevan

[TASS](#), May 20, 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has arrived in Armenia on a working visit, according to a correspondent from TASS.

During his stay, Mr Lavrov is scheduled to hold talks with his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan. Meetings with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Vahagn Khachaturyan are also expected to take place.

This marks the top Russian diplomat's first visit to Yerevan since June 2022.

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the agenda includes "a wide range of issues related to bilateral cooperation, collaboration within Eurasian integration frameworks, and the coordination of positions at international platforms, particularly within the United Nations."

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov Pays Working Visit to Yerevan

[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), May 21, 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov paid a working visit to Yerevan on 20–21 May, at the invitation of Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

During talks held at the Armenian Foreign Ministry, the two foreign ministers discussed a broad range of issues, including the development of bilateral cooperation, engagement within Eurasian integration bodies, and coordination at the United Nations and other international platforms. The visit culminated in the signing of the Plan of Inter-Ministerial Consultations for 2025–2026.

The ministers also held in-depth discussions on regional security. Russia reaffirmed its readiness to continue supporting the Armenian-Azerbaijani normalisation process, based on the trilateral agreements signed by the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan between 2020 and 2022. Both sides agreed to intensify efforts to utilise the potential of the 3+3 Regional Cooperation Platform, which aims to address challenges in the South Caucasus through dialogue among regional states and their immediate neighbours.

Mr Lavrov was also received by the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, and the President of Armenia, Vahagn Khachaturyan. During these meetings, both parties expressed their intention to strengthen political dialogue and interdepartmental cooperation. They underlined the importance of enhancing trade and economic ties as a foundation for deepening mutual understanding and resolving shared concerns. A shared commitment to preserving historical memory was also emphasised, particularly in light of the forthcoming 80th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War.

As part of his visit, Mr Lavrov addressed faculty and students at the Russian-Armenian University, including those from branches of Russian universities and members of the expert community. He also met with Russian compatriots at the Russia House.

In keeping with tradition, Mr Lavrov laid flowers at the Eternal Flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and a wreath at the Armenian Genocide Memorial.

Radical Groups in Afghanistan Remain Central Asia's Greatest Threat — Russian Defence Minister

[TASS](#), May 28, 2025

Numerous radical groups operating within Afghanistan continue to pose the most significant threat to Central Asia, Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov said during a meeting of the defence ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).

“More than 20 radical groups, each comprising over 15,000 militants, remain active in Afghanistan,” Belousov warned. “They represent the main threat to security in the Central Asian region, with the risk of infiltration into neighbouring countries continuing to grow.”

He also noted that instability in the Middle East further exacerbates the regional security landscape.

According to the minister, foreign militants from active armed groups are not only infiltrating Afghanistan but are also making their way into other Central Asian nations, increasing concerns about cross-border terrorism and regional destabilisation.

Russia and India Continue S-400 Missile System Talks — Ambassador

[TASS](#), May 29, 2025

Discussions between Russia and India regarding the potential acquisition of additional S-400 Triumf air defence systems are ongoing, Russian Ambassador to India Denis Alipov confirmed in an interview with the IANS news agency.

“Our dialogue on this matter, as with many others, continues. It would be premature to discuss the outcome at this stage,” Alipov said, responding to reports of India’s interest in further expanding its air defence capabilities.

India signed a \$5.43 billion deal with Russia in 2018 for five S-400 systems. The first was deployed in 2021 in Punjab, close to the Pakistan border. The S-400 is one of the world’s most advanced surface-to-air missile systems, capable of targeting multiple aerial threats at long range.

Referring to Operation Sindoor, in which Indian forces struck nine terrorist-linked targets in Pakistan, Alipov noted that Russian-supplied equipment, including the S-400 and BrahMos missiles, had been reportedly used with “exemplary” performance.

The BrahMos missile, a key product of Indo-Russian defence cooperation, is jointly developed and produced by BrahMos Aerospace in India. It is used by all three branches of the Indian military.

“We are very satisfied with the BrahMos venture. It’s a successful model of cooperation and we’re keen to expand on it,” Alipov said.

On 11 May, India inaugurated a second BrahMos production plant in Lucknow, part of its broader push for indigenous defence manufacturing.

The ambassador underscored that defence remains a strong pillar of the Russia–India relationship, with further projects under discussion.

Russia Prioritises Economic Ties with Uzbekistan — Prime Minister Mishustin

[TASS](#), May 29, 2025

Russia places special emphasis on strengthening its economic and cultural ties with Uzbekistan, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said during a meeting with Saida Mirziyoyeva, First Assistant to the President of Uzbekistan.

“Uzbekistan is a very important, reliable ally of Russia. We sincerely value our good-neighbourly, fraternal relations,” Mishustin stated. He commended the coordinated efforts between the two governments and underlined the priority given to trade, economic collaboration, and humanitarian links.

Highlighting cultural diplomacy, the Prime Minister announced that the Days of Russian Culture in Uzbekistan will commence this Thursday in Tashkent, with Russia's Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova leading the delegation.

Mishustin also expressed gratitude to Uzbekistan’s leadership for their ongoing support for the Russian language and noted that the country hosts the largest number of Russian university branches abroad. Over 56,000 Uzbek citizens are currently studying in Russia.

Preparations for Second Round of Russia–Ukraine Talks Underway Amid Uncertainty

[TASS](#), May 30, 2025

Russia has confirmed its readiness to present a detailed memorandum addressing the root causes of the Ukraine conflict during a second round of direct talks scheduled for **2 June** in Istanbul. However, Ukraine has yet to formally confirm its participation.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced the planned meeting, following a phone call with Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan. Lavrov stated that Russia had promptly prepared the memorandum and expressed hope that “those truly committed to peace will support the resumption of direct dialogue.”

The Russian delegation will be led once again by Presidential Aide Vladimir Medinsky, who also headed the first round on 16 May. Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova confirmed the composition of the team remains unchanged.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, who leads Kiev’s delegation, indicated that Ukraine is open to further talks but requested to see the Russian memorandum in advance. The Kremlin, however, described this request as unhelpful. Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov emphasised the importance of continuing the dialogue and noted that Ukraine had yet to respond to the proposed date.

Mediation efforts are being led by Turkey, with Foreign Minister Fidan calling the June 2 initiative “important.” He noted that Ankara had conveyed ceasefire proposals to both Moscow and Kiev, while also consulting with Washington, London, Berlin and Paris.

In a concerning development, Medinsky’s family was reportedly targeted by Ukrainian nationalist threats, with their personal information published on the controversial Mirotvorets website. Russia’s Investigative Committee has launched a criminal inquiry in response.

Despite the tensions, Moscow remains committed to proceeding with the talks, pending confirmation from Ukraine.

About the Author

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