

# CHINA, RUSSIA LOOK TO DEEPEN 'BEST' TIES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Russia's relations with China were currently at "the best in their entire history", Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said as he began a key visit to China on Monday.

The visit comes shortly after the March 19 China-U.S. dialogue in Alaska and follows the first leaders' summit of the Quad — India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. — held virtually on March 12.

Mr. Lavrov said in an interview with Chinese State media, ahead of his talks with his counterpart Wang Yi, that "the international situation is undergoing profound changes, with new centres of economic, financial and political influence growing stronger".

"However, these objective developments, which are leading to the formation of a truly multipolar and democratic world, are unfortunately being hindered by Western countries, particularly the United States," he said, adding that "they seek to continue to dominate at any cost on global economy and politics and impose their will and requirements on others".

"In response, Russia and China are promoting a constructive and unifying agenda and hope that the international governance system would be fair and democratic, run smoothly and be based on extensive interaction between countries and their integration initiatives," the official Xinhua news agency quoted him as saying, adding that the "mutually trusting and respectful dialogue should serve as an example to other countries".

## 'Best in history'

"Current Russia-China relations are assessed both by our national leaders and citizens as the best in their entire history," he said. "This is a well-deserved and fair assessment." This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Treaty of Good-neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation signed in July 2001, which Mr. Lavrov credited for deepening strategic relations and creating "a model of interaction between Russia and China that is absolutely free from any ideological constraints... of an intrinsic nature, not subject to any opportunistic factors nor against any third country."

Both countries are expected to discuss deepening coordination against the threat of sanctions from the West. Only on Monday, the EU imposed sanctions on four Chinese officials for human rights violations in Xinjiang, the first sanctions since the 1989 arms embargo. Mr. Lavrov called on both countries — permanent members of the UN Security Council — to work "under the UN framework on the immediate end to unilateral coercive measures" and to "take the opportunity to enhance their scientific and technological innovation and improve their national strength in response to the sanctions".

Trade ties are also on the agenda, with bilateral trade last year reaching \$107 billion. China is Russia's biggest trade partner.

Li Yonghui, a Russia expert at the official Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, wrote in an article on Monday in the Communist Party-run *Global Times* that the China-Russia relationship could "counterbalance" the Quad.

“Russia should not be ignored regarding its capabilities to offset the influence of Quad,” the commentary said, noting in particular Russia’s continuing close relations with India as a potential “destabilising factor” for the Quad’s potential. “India will not destroy its relations with Russia just because it wants to seek courtship with the U.S. to deal with China,” it said. “From this perspective, if Russia-India relations continue in a stable way, they will to some extent restrain India-US ties from further deepening.”

### **Strategic triangle**

Ms. Li, in the commentary, noted that “as early as December 1998, then Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov expressed hope that Russia, China and India could establish a 'strategic triangle' that would be in the interests of peace and security”.

“Currently, though China and India have undergone twists and turns in their relations due to border tensions, Russia still hopes that Beijing and New Delhi won’t engage in bigger problems,” she said. “Russia has actually played an active role between China and India. In other words, Russia has maintained relatively close ties with India, which has thereupon become a counterbalance to the so-called Quad group of the US, Japan, India and Australia.”

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