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US-Russian relations 'close to bottom, to remain low a long time' – Lavrov

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*"We have gone down pretty deep. I really hope this downward movement of the level of our cooperation has reached some kind of a bottom," he said on Monday in Moscow in an open lecture on Russia's foreign relations.*

Lavrov said the cold does not amount to a new Cold War, but the period is likely to be a long one.

*"Of course it's not a Cold War. The right question is: where do these relations go now?" he said. "Let's leave it to historians. Certainly someone sometime will describe this period for the textbooks with a colorful term."*

He described the situation as "abnormal" and said Washington is the side that chose to escalate the tension.

Ironically, the US is not hesitant to cooperate in areas they find necessary even amid this confrontation, and Washington's own attempts to isolate Russia are damaging, Lavrov said. An example is the nuclear reduction talks, which the US de facto put on hold by suspending the bilateral US-Russia presidential commission.

*"We had everything agreed for a thorough professional discussion in the framework of one of the working groups of the very presidential commission that the Americans suspended. Now they say, let's talk about further nuclear reduction. That's not fair. As if they took us for naïve*

*simpletons,"* he said.

Still Russia sees no alternative to eventually overcoming the differences with the US - the current frosty relations don't just hurt the two countries but the international community as well.

*"We believe there is no sensible alternative to repairing relations with the European Union and, for that matter, with the United States,"* he said. *"But the other party must grow to understand that unilateral measures to enforce their will are counterproductive, and that only a dialogue of equals can be a basis for moving on."*

Russian relations with the US and some other Western nations plunged to their lowest ebb since the fall of the Soviet Union, after an armed coup in Ukraine in February, which was hailed as legitimate in Washington and Brussels.

The overthrow of the government led to Ukraine's region of Crimea to secede and seek unification with Russia, which Moscow granted. Meanwhile the regions of Lugansk and Donetsk erupted in protest, which escalated into a full-fledged civil war when Kiev sent its military to suppress the dissent.

Washington accuses Russia of illegally annexing Crimea and supporting the rebel forces in Ukraine. Moscow insists that the Crimean move was legal and denies any official backing of the rebels.

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