

Russian Perspectives: Briefing, 3rd July 2018



H.E. Dr Alexander Yakovenko, Ambassador of the Russian Federation, gave a Briefing at the Residence of the Russian Embassy, chaired by Lady Olga Maitland and Major General Patrick Cordingley, DSO.

The Briefing covered 'world events, Middle East, Turkey, Asia, North Korea Summit, US, Europe, and the Bilateral relationship with the UK.'

The highlights of this global 'tour de force' included:

Russia's global strategy

Our ultimate goal is to have the right relationships with other countries and enhance the well-being of our people.

We recognise that both Russia and the USA have the nuclear capability to destroy each other four times over – for example, Russia has 1,500 nuclear warheads. Yes, the UK only has 40, but I think it's more important for countries on the Security Council to focus on the strength of their respective economies, rather than the number of nuclear weapons they hold.

I would be happy to see the USSR and the USA ultimately eliminate their nuclear weapons, but that is a personal view.



Russia's current relationship with United Kingdom

Relationships could be better. There is not much co-operation on the political level. Having said that, our bilateral trade is significantly increasing.

We still maintain good contacts at various levels – for example, between our Scientists. We also collaborate on various cultural activities, and our museums are working together to create shared exhibitions.

On North Korea

A year ago, we, along with China, went to the Security Council and proposed a two-stage approach to help resolve matters between the USA and North Korea. The USA did not endorse this.

However, one year on, our approach is exactly what President Trump is doing. We support this approach. If it works, all of us will benefit. It really depends how far North Korea will go with reforms.

On China

Russia has good relations with China, and supports their 'One Road, One Belt' strategy. We are keen to see the formation of a Euro-Asian Union.

On Afghanistan

It's encouraging that the Afghan Government is engaging with the Taliban. Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more of ISIS, who are far more aggressive.

On Syria

Russia and the USA are co-operating in fighting terrorism.

On Yemen

Russia is relying on the UN to find a solution to this complex conflict.

On Israel & Palestine

Russia has good relations with Israel. However, whilst Israel wants to make Jerusalem it's capital, we acknowledge their position on West Jerusalem – but East Jerusalem remains with the Palestinians.

**On accusations of interference**

There have been accusations of Russia meddling in elections in France and the USA, the Brexit vote and orchestrating the Salisbury poisoning. We always say; 'please show us the evidence' and then it goes quiet.

On forthcoming Russian-USA meeting on 16th July

This represents a chance for real dialogue. Both leaders will each have a list in their pockets of issues to discuss, and with six hours or more, should be able to discuss the whole world agenda.

The key will be the personal relationship between the two leaders, and both mastering the art of understanding the other side's point of view.