European leaders are ‘political masochists’ – Lavrov

The Russian foreign minister has accused Western politicians of sacrificing their citizens’ welfare in pursuit of defeating Moscow in Ukraine

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has branded European leaders *“political masochists,”* accusing them of sacrificing their own citizens’ welfare in pursuit of Russia’s defeat in Ukraine.

Speaking to editors-in-chief of African media outlets in Moscow on Tuesday, Lavrov accused Western governments of pressuring their populations to accept declining living standards to secure Ukraine’s victory in conflict with Russia.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow on October 27, 2026. © Sputnik / Sergey Bobylev

“They are trying to keep public opinion in a position where people must sacrifice everything: salaries, jobs, healthcare services and social benefits in general, so that Ukraine defeats Russia,” Lavrov said. *“People can feel how their situation is deteriorating in European countries,”*

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he added.

He singled out German Chancellor Friedrich Merz as one of the politicians advocating such an approach. *"These are masochists, political masochists, if you like,"* the foreign minister said.

Merz has defended Germany's growing military spending and continued support for Kiev while warning that the country can no longer afford its existing welfare system.

The German government has tightened welfare rules, introducing benefit reductions of 30% for repeated violations and, in some cases, complete withdrawal. Berlin's proposed 2027 budget also envisages billions of euros in savings from pensions, healthcare and other social programs.

Germany has meanwhile earmarked €11.6 billion for Ukraine in 2027, alongside plans to raise defense spending to record levels.

Britain, another major backer of Kiev, has also reduced welfare payments, nearly halving health-related benefits for most new claimants under Universal Credit, a program supporting low-income households and people unable to work.



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In September, Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch called for further welfare cuts to fund increased military spending. *"We need to fund our defence, not spend all our money on welfare,"* she said. The government, however, rejected her proposal.

France has likewise pursued spending restraint, including a proposed public-sector pay freeze, while increasing military expenditure. The measures have faced opposition from trade unions protesting declining purchasing power and deteriorating public services.

Public discontent has fueled widespread protests across Europe in recent weeks, with hundreds of thousands demonstrating in France over rising living costs, education funding and inequality. Tens of thousands have also taken to the streets in Spain and Portugal over soaring housing costs, while Italy has seen protests over declining living standards.

European NATO members have committed to substantially increasing defense expenditure, citing the perceived threat from Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin last week rejected repeated claims that Moscow was preparing for war

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with Europe, describing them as part of an ongoing *"anti-Russian campaign"* on the continent. *"They now go so far as to constantly speak of a 'Russian threat' and even discuss preparations for a war with Russia – which, in my view, amounts to a kind of political schizophrenia. But I hope that it will pass,"* Putin stated.

Moscow has repeatedly dismissed claims that it intends to attack NATO countries as *"nonsense,"* accusing Western leaders of using the alleged Russian threat to justify militarization and continued support for Kiev.

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