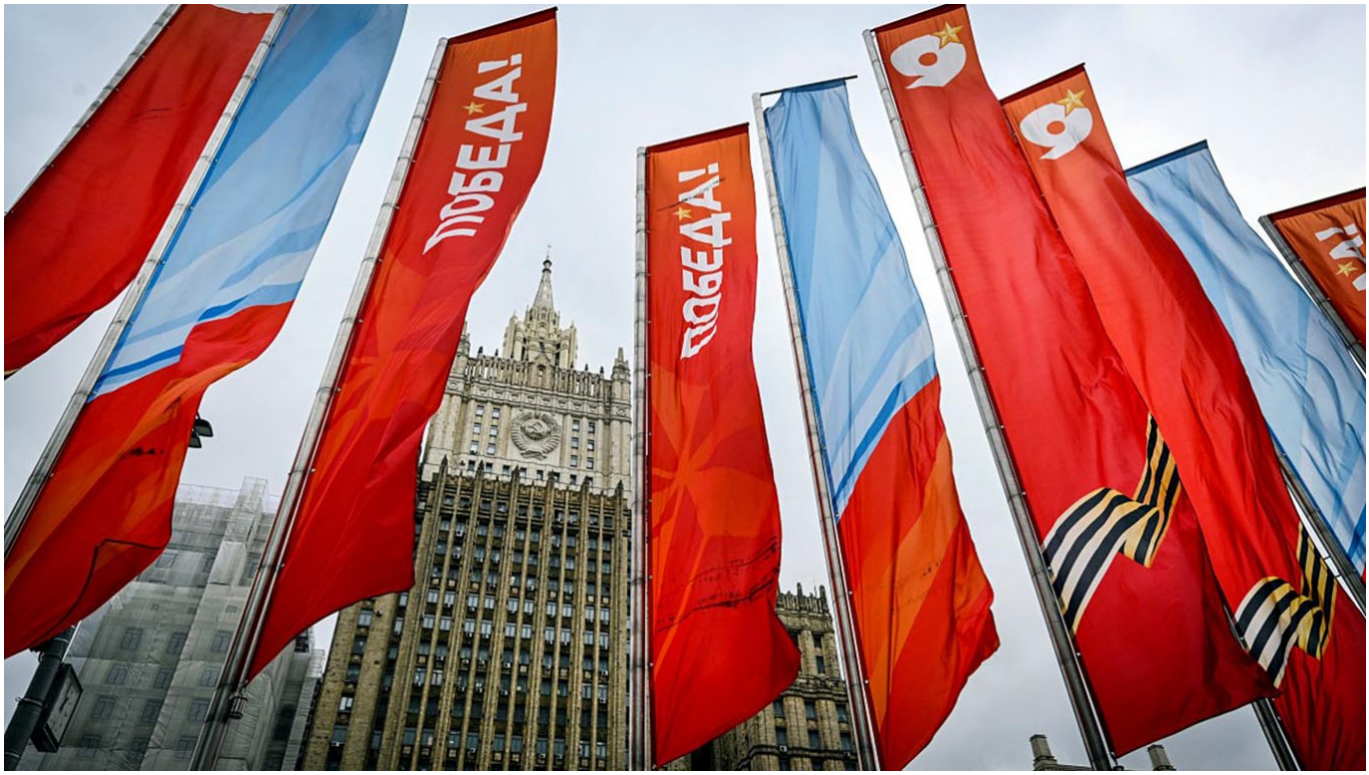
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Foreign Ministry Accuses West of Seeking Anti-Russian 'Staging Ground' in Central Asia

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The Russian Foreign Ministry building in Moscow. **Alexander Nemenov / AFP**

A senior Russian diplomat on Tuesday accused Western powers of trying to turn Central Asia into an anti-Russian "staging ground," warning in particular that the United States and its allies seek to take control of the region's strategic resources and transportation corridors.

Russia has long viewed Central Asia, which is made up of five former Soviet republics, as its "near abroad." Since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, however, governments in the region have increasingly moved to balance their traditional ties to Moscow with new security and economic partnerships with the West and China.

"Today, the West continues its efforts to reshape the region to suit its own interests, seeking to secure access to its natural resources and gain control over its transit corridors," Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin said during a meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club.

According to the state-run TASS news agency, Galuzin alleged that the West wants "to turn the Central Asian nations into a staging ground for threats against Russia's security."

Alexander Sternik, a high-ranking official within the Foreign Ministry's department for the Commonwealth of Independent States, echoed those sentiments at the Valdai Discussion Club by accusing Washington of "blanketing" the region with deals intended to secure control over critical minerals and trade routes.

Sternik further argued that British and EU engagement in the region is being conducted under the pretext of economic diversification while actually aiming to isolate Russia.

Central Asia is known for its vast natural wealth. Kazakhstan is a global leader in uranium and rare earth production, Uzbekistan holds massive gold reserves and Turkmenistan sits on some of the world's largest natural gas deposits.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are also looking to tap into new mineral wealth, but the remote and mountainous terrain of both countries makes large-scale extraction difficult.

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