

A World in Crisis: The Putin-Obama Talks

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Since reelected in March, Putin and Obama met for the first time on Monday at the Los Cabos, Mexico G20 meeting.

Discussions focused on major geopolitical and economic issues. Differences on Syria remain unresolved.

At a joint press conference, Putin said:

“We held talks about international problems including the Syrian crisis.”

“(W)e will continue our contacts on all issues.”

Obama responded:

“We have agreed on the necessity of reaching a halt for violence in Syria and the need for running a political process to avoid a civil war.”

A lengthy [White House](#)-released joint statement covered many issues. On Syria, it said:

“We agree to cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally to solve regional conflicts.”

“In order to stop the bloodshed in Syria, we call for an immediate cessation of all violence and express full support for the efforts of UN/League of Arab States Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, including moving forward on political transition to a democratic, pluralistic political system that would be implemented by the Syrians themselves in the framework of Syria’s sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity.”

“We are united in the belief that the Syrian people should have the opportunity to independently and democratically choose their own future.”

Additional language called for achieving a comprehensive Middle East peace. Putin and other leaders want nothing less. Obama itches for more war. Talking peace and stoking conflicts reveal America's transparent hypocrisy.

Diplomatic boilerplate left fundamental differences unresolved. Both leaders are ideologically distant.

Putin supports peace, stability, and inviolable national sovereignty rights.

Obama thrives on violence and imperial wars. He believes meddling in the internal affairs of other nations is America's divine right. Pursuing unchallenged global dominance is policy.

Putin won't support Libya 2.0. Following his two-hour meeting with Obama, he said little.

In contrast, US officials publicly condemn Russia for refusing to bend to Washington's will. Media scoundrels regurgitate their criticisms. Real issues go unaddressed.

Common interests between both nations exist. Major differences remain intractable. They include Syria, Iran's legitimate nuclear rights, America's threatening missile shield, and encroaching military presence. More on Iran below.

Pending congressional legislation blocking visas and freezing assets of Russian officials accused of human rights abuses also heightens tensions between the two leaders.

Meddling in Russia's internal affairs strains relations. So does Putin's straight talk on America's quest for "unipolar world" dominance.

After Monday's talks, The [New York Times](#) headlined "Face to Face, Obama Tries to Persuade Putin on Syria," saying:

Neither leader yielded. "Putin was still balking," said The Times. He wants peace. Obama wants confrontation, war and dominance.

US officials said "Putin spent considerable time pointing to what the Russians view as failed examples of political transition in Egypt and Libya as well as their concern that the West does not have a credible plan for what would happen to Syria's various battling factions and ethnic groups if Mr. Assad stepped down from power."

At the same time, they didn't try "to paint the meeting between the men as full of bonhomie and good cheer."

Obama seeks regime change. He wants pro-Western puppet governance replacing Assad. He wants Sino-Russian regional influence weakened.

America accepts no global challengers. Putin stands fundamentally opposed. Irreconcilable differences follow. Resolving them remains distant.

In May, Putin cancelled plans to attend the Camp David G8 summit. He wasn't with other NATO states in Chicago. He delayed meeting with Obama until Monday.

He met earlier in June with other world leaders. Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Francois Hollande were prioritized. Chinese and Central Asian leaders followed.

Talks with Merkel focused on Syria and closer economic ties. She and Hollande support military intervention. The French leader openly favors it. Berlin wants Moscow's support for whatever America plans.

It's also Russia's second largest trading partner after China. It depends on 40% of its gas imports from Gazprom. It treads a delicate balance between growing Sino-Russian trade and longstanding US ties.

It also understands that security depends more on cooperation than confrontation. Hollande may have other views. He favors military intervention and more sanctions. Putin rejects both. Cordiality was absent when both leaders met.

Putin's visit with China's Hu Jintao stressed developing closer strategic ties and solidarity. In a joint statement, both leaders vowed to "set the global political and economic order in a more fair and rational direction."

They explicitly want unchallenged US dominance ended. Moscow spokesman Dmitry Peskov said:

"Russia and China are staunch supporters of a multipolar world and they try to push all systems of international relations toward a multipolar world."

In a People's Daily editorial, Putin called Russia's partnership with China "something needed in today's world."

Both nations "share very similar positions on all of these issues, positions based on the principles of responsibility, commitment to the basic values of international law, and unconditional mutual respect for each other's interests."

They remain resolute against Syrian intervention. Following their meeting, China state television said their leaders stress resolving Syria's conflict politically.

China's official CCTV network aired their opening remarks live. So were comments they both made to Russian and Chinese journalists.

Other Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) members share their views. They prioritize security and economic cooperation.

Afghanistan remains a festering sore. Putin and Hu worry about Washington's permanent presence. Remaining threatens both countries. Hu told People's Daily:

"We will continue to follow the concept that regional affairs should be managed by countries in the region, that we should guard against shocks from turbulence outside the region, and that (SCO members) should play a bigger role in Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction."

While Putin met Hu and other SCO leaders in Beijing, Hillary Clinton visited Georgia President Mikheil Saakashvili. In August 2008, Washington used him against Russia.

South Ossetian aggression forced Moscow's hand. Protecting its citizens was important. Other issues emboldened both sides. Kremlin officials loath Saakashvili. Allying with Washington against their interests stokes tensions.

Clinton announced new military aid. She denounced "Russia's occupation and militarization of Georgia's territory." She referred to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Both provinces broke away from Georgia.

Putin raised concerns about Washington's Asian military buildup. He's also apprehensive about undermining Sino-Russian regional influence. He has just cause. By 2020, America will deploy 60% of its naval forces in East Asia. As they increase, so will tensions.

A Final Comment

On June 18 and 19, Moscow hosted P5+1 country nuclear talks on Iran. Participating nations include the five permanent Security Council members – America, Russia, China, Britain, and France – plus Germany.

Iran negotiates in good faith. Earlier rounds produced no breakthroughs. At issue isn't Iran's nuclear program. Tehran's a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatory. It complies fully with provisions. No evidence suggests otherwise. Nonetheless, bogus accusations persist.

Iran won't relinquish its legal rights, nor should it. Washington remains hardline and obstructionist. So does Israel. Its officials aren't present. Their influence is pervasive. They don't give an inch.

They want unchallenged Middle East dominance. America wants it globally. Getting means eliminating rivals. They're targeted one at a time or in multiples. Syria's next in line, then Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Day one talks were "intense and tough." Neither side budged. Progress was absent.

Iran's program is peaceful. It observes NPT provisions. It won't comply with unreasonable demands. It deserves rights similar to dozens of other states with commercial nuclear programs.

It won't sacrifice its development and production capability to please Washington and Israel. Pursuing its legal rights, it's called hardline. According to one unnamed Western diplomat:

"We haven't reached an agreement, but it is more complex than that. We haven't gotten to the end of the conversation."

Multiple rounds of sanctions target Tehran. New ones take effect in July 1. Israel threatens to bomb Iran if its will isn't obeyed. Oil markets are nervous about losing supplies.

According to Russian negotiator Sergei Ryabkov:

"The main stumbling block is that the sides' positions are rather difficult and tough to reconcile."

Given Washington and Israeli intransigence, breakthroughs aren't possible. An unnamed Iranian diplomat said:

"Up to now, the environment is not positive at all."

Discussions will continue for one or more days. Nothing's been accomplished so far. Nor was anything earlier. Expect little progress ahead.

Israeli Vice Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon was blunt. He said Israel "could find itself facing the dilemma of 'a bomb, or to bomb.'"

"Should that be the choice, then bombing (Iran) is preferable to a bomb (in Tehran's hands). I hope we do not face that dilemma."

Iran's Fars News Agency said its negotiators can't resolve other issues if its 20% enrichment rights are ignored and sanctions aren't lifted.

They also stressed they won't wait forever. Time is running out. Resolution is within reach if Western powers recognize Iran's legal rights. Why relinquish what other nuclear states are allowed to pursue.

Fereidoun Abbasi Davani, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said:

"We have no reason to cede on 20 per cent because we produce only as much of the 20 fuel as we need. No more, no less." Doing so is legal.

Tehran needs this level for its medical research reactor. It produces isotopes for treating about one million cancer patients.

No matter. Bullying Iran unjustly persists. It negotiates in good faith. Its nuclear program is red herring cover for regime change. All parties know it operates legally. At issue is replacing independent leaders with pro-Western puppet ones.

Iran won't surrender its sovereignty. Ad infinitum negotiating rounds won't change things.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

His new book is titled "How Wall Street Fleeces America: Privatized Banking, Government Collusion and Class War"

<http://www.claritypress.com/Lendman.html>

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network Thursdays at 10AM US Central time and Saturdays and Sundays at noon. All programs are archived for easy listening.

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About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

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