

Historic UN Security Council Resolution 2254 on Syria: The Backrooms of Diplomacy, US Last Minute Attempt to “Double Cross”?

By [Carla Stea](#)

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Theme: [United Nations](#), [US NATO War](#)
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On December 18, 2015 the International Syria support Group, consisting of seventeen concerned countries, most significantly including Russia, the United States, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, met at 9:30AM at the New York Palace Hotel. As the group was not yet an official United Nations entity, it met in a “private” venue. Entering the Palace Hotel, at 8:30AM, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that a political resolution of the Syria crisis is imperative, and the only solution, and this political agreement should not permit any retreat from this decision, only forward action.

Throughout the next four hours, rumors circulated among the many reporters gathered at the hotel, most significantly, and predictably, it was rumored that there was still serious conflict and disagreement among the major countries gathered there, who were still bitterly arguing about the final wording of the resolution they hoped to have adopted at the UN Security Council at the scheduled 3PM meeting.

One of the more intriguing rumors implied that the US Delegation, led by Secretary of State John Kerry, had attempted, at the conference beginning, to insert a paragraph in the resolution that violated the agreement between Secretary Kerry and President Putin at their Moscow meeting earlier in the week, and that the Russian delegation, led by Sergei Lavrov was hotly contesting the insertion of this unauthorized paragraph in the final resolution.

If this rumor is accurate, it implies that the US delegation attempted a last minute “double-cross.” It was impossible to determine what the new insertion contained, (if, in fact, it actually existed) beyond wild (or not so wild) conjecture. Another rumor contended that a resolution would be finally agreed upon, but a resolution that would not address anything of substance, or any of the contentious issues, and would amount to merely a cosmetic device to suggest action, disguising the fact that the drastic divide between the opposing sides of the Syrian conflict had not been narrowed. In particular, Saudi Arabia demanded President Assad’s immediate ouster, and Iran supports the Syrian President.

I had the privilege of a brief discussion with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, one of the world’s great diplomats, and I mentioned to him that the new coalition of Russia, China and Iran in this International Syria Support Group process is a formidable “game changer,” in many respects, and potentially even beyond Syria, which may be alarming to NATO. And I added that it is significant that the foreign ministers involved, were the best possible choice

of diplomats, including Lavrov, himself, Wang Yi and Li Baodong of China, and Javad Zarif of Iran, all men of brilliance, and quintessential decency, representative of great civilizations and cultures.

Lavrov replied, emphatically, that their “three countries are seeking peace, and an end to terrorism.” We did not have time to discuss the obstacles presented by the fact that war is profitable, and that there are those who have an interest in obstructing this peace process, which would reduce their profits. Of course, Lavrov is well aware of this.

After an hour’s delay, the Security Council met at 4PM, at which point there was unanimous consent to adopt Resolution S/RES/2254 (2015) which was, as the earlier rumor implied, too general to have a substantial impact in defusing the crisis in Syria. The only paragraph which actually addressed the “situation on the ground” is OP 13, which states:

“Demands that all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons, including through shelling and aerial bombardment, welcomes the commitment by the International Syria Support Group to press the parties in this regard, and further demands that all parties immediately comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law as applicable.”

Significantly, the Resolution “Demanded cessation of any indiscriminate use of weapons,” but did not specifically mention barrel bombs, use of which the U.S. repeatedly identifies with Syrian government forces.

The Resolution at no point explicitly mentions regime change, nor does it specifically mention President Assad. It calls for “elections to be held within 18 months,” and it fails to address the possibility that in free and fair elections Bashir Assad might actually be elected president. The catch is “free and fair,” since the manipulation of election results is notorious, both within the USA itself, and through its overt and covert interference in elections or election results historically, including Iran, in 1952, through Guatemala in 1954, Indonesia, 1965, Chile, 1973, through the present instigation of “color revolutions,” most recently in Ukraine in 2014, which led to the overthrow of the democratically elected President Yanukovich, replaced by a man more agreeable to Western corporate interests – in plainspeak, a proxy.

Although there was no mention of President Assad in the Resolution, Secretary Kerry, during his speech at the Security Council stated:

“President Assad, in our judgment – and not everybody shares this- but the majority of the people in the ISSG believe that President Assad has lost the ability, the credibility, to be able to unite the country and to provide the moral credibility to be able to govern it into the future.”

Foreign Minister Lavrov stated:

“The Vienna format was the only one that brought together all influential players to find a sustainable and fair settlement through talks with the Government and the ‘whole span’ of the opposition. Only Syrian-led inclusive

dialogue can put an end to the untold suffering of the Syrian people.”

Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated:

“International efforts to find a political solution have been relentless, and the need now is to build on experience and lessons learned to make the process irreversible. Since there can be no military solution, a political settlement is the only way. All parties must stop fighting immediately.”

Following the Security Council meeting, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, together with UN Special Envoy Stefan Di Mistura held a press conference at which Kerry tempered his blaming of President Assad for instigating this crisis, and Foreign Minister Lavrov repeated that the international community should have by now learned that the demonization and removal of an individual leader and destruction of his government had not led to “democracy,” but has led to disaster in Iraq and Libya, and it should by now be recognized that the removal of Assad will not only fail to improve the situation in Syria, but will lead to a more deadly outcome in Syria, spreading throughout the region and elsewhere, exacerbating the refugee crisis.

“The last thing I wanted to say: We often hear it said that without solving the Assad issue, it is impossible to achieve full-fledged coordination in counterterrorism. But this logic is very dangerous because it brings to naught all the principles enshrined and endorsed by the Security Council. These principles say that there is no justification whatsoever for terrorism and in counterterrorism there should be no preconditions. We should set our priorities straight. ISIS terrorists are our common threat and our civilizational challenge to the whole humankind, so sacrificing it in the name of political ambitions would be a terrible mistake.”

Particularly disturbing, and revealing at this joint press conference was the heckling of John Kerry for backing off his earlier call to remove President Assad. At least two journalists, one representing a Saudi sponsored publication, aggressively berated Kerry for relinquishing his earlier demand for Assad’s immediate removal, as a precondition, and his earlier identification of Assad as the root cause of Syria’s disastrous war. The hawkish position of these journalists give voice to those who have an interest in disrupting this peace process, a peace process being elaborated with excruciating difficulty. After all, profits are at risk if war is averted.

Both Kerry’s and Lavrov’s positions are still so diametrically opposed that it will clearly be exorbitantly difficult to reach sufficient common ground to end the crisis in Syria, but it does appear that there is at least some political will to work toward that goal, if only for the sake of appearances. And it is difficult to ignore the fact that the refugee crisis holds the potential to destabilize Europe, and beyond. It is impossible to predict what future developments or obstacles may expedite or impede this peace process.

Following the conference, as Iran’s Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, himself a miracle of sanity in the midst of a decomposing world, left the building a Turkish journalist called out to him: “Are you happy with the outcome?” Zarif, with his characteristic contempt for bureaucratic obfuscation replied: “What outcome?,” and left the building.

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About the author:

Author and Geopolitical analyst Carla Stea is Global Research's Correspondent at United Nations headquarters, New York, NY.

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