

Iran and US Officials Attend a Russian Security Forum but Nobody Is Talking About It

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The tenth international meeting on security has just concluded in the Russian the city of Ufa. The forum has been under-reported, but it represents one of the few global examples of multilateral meetings between high-level representatives of countries that are in conflict. Hundreds of representatives from as many as 120 countries attended the meeting over three days to discuss humanitarian crises, hybrid warfare, terrorist threats and ways to recover from armed conflict.

President Putin's opening speech was [read](#) aloud by Russian Security Council chief Nikolai Patrushev, which explained the forum's agenda and objectives, namely, to create a positive atmosphere that should succeed in reducing various areas of tension between countries around the globe.

"I expect your communication to be substantial and fruitful, and will help achieve our common goal of creating a reliable, flexible, indivisible and equal for all security system at the regional and global level. US exit from arms reduction treaties undermines global security. This forum has fully proved to be in demand and effective, ensuring a dialogue on countering global challenges. The meeting's agenda addresses problems requiring joint solutions and collective action, overcoming the consequences of armed conflict and humanitarian problems, as well as ensuring information security."

The most important news of the day coming from Ufa was revealed by [Tass](#):

"A high-ranking official from the US National Security Council will take part in an international meeting of high security representatives at Ufa on June 18-20, Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council Alexander Venediktov said in an interview with the Rossiyskaya Gazeta daily on Sunday."

This disclosure is particularly relevant as the US has not sent any representatives to attend the international security meeting in the last four years. This is an event where leading figures can meet and discuss ways of overcoming disagreements in spite of any current difficulties that may exist between countries, such as between Iran and the US.

The Ufa forum has drawn little attention from the international press and has even been little reported on in the host country, with only Tass putting out a couple of reports on the gathering. The lack of media exposure is probably intentional, with the lack of a media spotlight allowing for diplomacy to calmly do its work without any unnecessary distractions.

The world is at a critical historical juncture, with potential or already volatile situations present on the Korean peninsula, in Venezuela, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, Ukraine, the Arctic, the Persian Gulf, and the Baltic, Black and South China Seas. Other volatile situations can be found in the cyber and information-warfare domains, as well as in the competition in space.

With so many potential flashpoints, a conference to address these dangers is most welcome. The fact that 120 countries have the opportunity to talk and think about possible ways for de-escalation is a rare opportunity that should not be left to go to waste.

Given current global events, the most significant attendees in Ufa are a senior [US National Security Council member](#) and the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), [Ali Shamkhani](#). As of now, the only official news comes from Ali Shamkhani's words concerning the possibility of mediation with the US and the possibility of Iran acquiring weapons systems to fend off US threats. Shamkhani [stated](#):

"We currently face demonstrative threats. Nevertheless, when it comes to air defense of our country, we consider using the foreign potential in addition to our domestic capacities... Mediation is out of question in the current situation. The United States has unilaterally withdrawn from the JCPOA, it has flouted its obligations and it has introduced illegal sanctions against Iran. The United States should return to the starting point and correct its own mistakes. This process needs no mediation,"

"This [gradually boosting of uranium enrichment and heavy water production beyond the levels outlined in the JCPOA] is a serious decision of the Islamic Republic [of Iran] and we will continue doing it step by step until JCPOA violators move toward agreement and return to fulfilling their obligations. [If JCPOA participants do not comply with the deal, Iran will be reducing its commitments] step by step within legal mechanisms that the JCPOA envisions."

He also accused the US of "exercising pressure on the Islamic Republic through claims that Iran was behind the attack on oil tankers attack in the Gulf of Oman". Speaking about the possibility of a closure of the Strait of Hormuz, he reiterated that "Iran will protect its borders and repel any encroachment". The official also stated that "Iran and the United States will not come to war as there is no reason for this war to happen".

Ali Shamkhani also held an [important meeting](#) with his Armenian counterpart to reaffirm how strategic trust and cooperation between Tehran and Yerevan is fundamental to the region, resisting external pressure from third parties. Currently Iran needs all the possible international support it can get in light of tensions with the US. The Ufa forum seems to be the perfect place for Iran to make this happen. The [meeting](#) between Ali Shamkhani and his Afghan counterpart, Hamdullah Mohib, seems to reflect this, being another example of how Iran is seeking more political allies.

Afghanistan is a central player in Eurasian integration, and Russia, India, China and Iran are all too keenly aware of the devastation wrought by the American occupation of the country.

The situation in Afghanistan seems to have improved recently, with regional powers increasingly acting independently of Washington's desire to plunge the country into a perpetual state of chaos and underdevelopment. In fact, the [next](#) regional meeting on

Afghanistan is set to be held in Tehran, with the participation of all five countries bordering Afghanistan, namely, Iran, Russia, China, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. Notably, Shamkhani asked neighboring countries to interact with the opposition in Afghanistan in order to draw them to the negotiating table, thereby limiting the influence of external actors in the country.

The meeting between Mohib and Shamkhani also served to reiterate how strategic cooperation between all relevant parties is fundamental to sustaining progress, peace and development in an area that is fundamental to Eurasian integration.

Ali Shamkhani also released some statements directed at Trump and the current state of Iran-US relations, [stating](#) that

“[Donald Trump’s America] is the most warmongering country in its history... If a wide range of countries decide to stand up to the illegal US blackmail and bullying, we can make the US retreat and adopt a rational and responsible behavior in the international system.”

Speaking of the US’s weaponization of the banking system and international finance, Shamkhani stated:

“No title other than economic terrorism suits this US behavior.”

He urged countries to create multilateral mechanisms to break US dominance on the global monetary system. He also pointed out that the US withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal was a blow against the role of diplomacy and dialogue in solving security challenges. However, most countries, he added, were appreciative of Iran’s “wise” behavior in giving diplomacy a chance and were dragging their feet with regard to US pressure to suspend the nuclear deal.

Shamkhani’s words testify to the level of dissatisfaction and annoyance that Iran feels, being treated as it is so aggressively by Washington following years of negotiation to finally agree on the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

Guo Shengkun, a [Senior Chinese security official](#) who attended the conference, underlined the importance of countries increasing dialogue and cooperation to avoid unnecessary conflicts and trade wars, a pointed reference to Washington’s actions in its trade war against the People’s Republic of China.

His Russian counterpart was even more direct, highlighting Washington’s fear of full-scale Eurasian integration led by China and Russia. Sergey Naryshkin, Director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, [stated](#):

“The US uses methods of hybrid war trying to hamper Russian cooperation, particularly with China. We are witnessing that. Moreover, there is no need to make any effort to see it, it is all happening before our very eyes.”

He also [commented](#) on how Washington exploits the US dollar as the global reserve

currency for economic warfare.

“It seems bewildering that the US continues to be the holder of the main reserve currency while behaving so aggressively and unpredictably. The monopoly position of the dollar in international economic relations has become anachronistic. Gradually, the dollar is becoming toxic.”

The political climate in Ufa seems very serene and inclined to favour dialogue and collaboration, showing how the Eurasian giants China, Russia and Iran are working together with enormous efforts to pacify the region and beyond. The [statement](#) of the Director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergey Naryshkin, about new US sanctions on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) reveal the profound cooperation between Moscow and Tehran in various fields including terrorism.

“It’s no secret that over the past several years sanctions have become a favored method of the US policy. What is especially alarming is that the restrictions are introduced absolutely arbitrarily, spontaneously and impulsively. Their initiators do not take into account not only the long-term consequences but also the opinion of the closest economic partners... [Regarding US sanctions against the IRGC] The IRGC has made a huge contribution to the fight against ISIL in Syria and Iraq.”

The Ufa meeting is not attracting any particular attention from the mainstream press (no mention of it has been made in the major Western news outlets). While it has been given some coverage by the Russian and Chinese media, most coverage has been given by Iranian media. This is an aspect worth considering given the current geopolitical environment. Moscow and Beijing have no intention of increasing the tension between Washington and other countries. Keeping a low media profile is a way of helping the Ufa forum act in a way that eases global tensions.

A war against Iran is a red line for virtually all forum participants. The fact that the US is represented at the forum at a time of elevated tensions with Iran, especially after having not attended for the previous four years, is a good signal from the Trump administration that it is willing to open dialogue with Iran despite the risk of continued provocations or intentional accidents between the two countries.

The explicit and direct words used by the Russian, Chinese and Iranian representatives suggest a complete coordination on essential issues like terrorism, especially when it is used by the US as a tool against geopolitical opponents around the world, whether it be on Russia’s southern border, in Syria, or in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. Terrorism used as tool of imperialism is something that Ufa places at the center of current global problems, trying to limit its impact and effectiveness.

Iran and Russia’s energy ministers [met](#) in the Iranian city of Isfahan on Tuesday to continue discussions about an oil-for-goods program in which the proceeds from the sale of Iranian oil would be used to pay for Russian agricultural equipment and products.

The Ufa forum shows the combined power of Russia and China in a multipolar global order. Beijing and Moscow seem to be the only two global superpowers able to mediate and gather countries around a table in spite of increasing tensions.

Putin and Xi Jinping's ability to de-escalate global tensions in such low-key forum as the one in Ufa (now in its tenth edition) is the only hope we have for avoiding or defusing conflicts and trade wars that may be erupt around the world.

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