

Trump/Putin Meeting at G20: On or Off? Showdown with China's Xi Jinping?

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G20 leaders will meet on Friday and Saturday in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Kiev's staged Black Sea provocation and Trump's trade war with China hang over the summit, along with US hostility toward Russia, endless war in Syria, and other major geopolitical issues.

Major Sino/US differences highlighted the mid-November APEC summit – notably America first protectionism v. fair trade.

For the first time, APEC leaders failed to agree on a joint communique, largely over major unresolved Sino/US disagreements.

Will the G20 summit end the same or a similar way – major differences between the Trump regime v. Russia and China highlighting it?

On Tuesday, John Bolton said Trump meet with Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Angela Merkel, Japan's Shinzo Abe, South Korea's Moon Jae-in, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, India's Narendra Modi, and Argentina's Mauricio Macri in Buenos Aires.

No meeting with Saudi crown prince Mohammad bin Salman is scheduled. According to White House press secretary Sarah Sanders, he hasn't "ruled out any interaction" with MBS.

It may or may not happen. Being together in the same venue, they'll certainly cross paths, perhaps to hold an unscheduled meeting – despite Bolton saying his schedule is "full to overflowing."

There's always time for what anyone wishes to do, no time for what someone wants avoided. According to Bolton, Putin and Trump will discuss "security issues, arms control, and regional issues, including the Middle East" – along with Kiev's Black Sea/Kerch Strait provocation and aftermath so far, if a meeting occurs. With one scheduled, it's hard imagining not having it with much to discuss.

On Tuesday, Trump threatened to cancel his meeting with Putin over the incident, saying

"I am getting a report on that tonight and that will determine what happens at the meeting,"

adding:

"That will be very determinative. Maybe I won't have the meeting...We're going to see, depending on what comes out tonight."

He blamed Russia for Kiev's provocation, saying

"I don't like that aggression. I don't want that aggression at all. Absolutely. And by the way, Europe shouldn't like that aggression. And Germany shouldn't like that aggression."

Was Kiev's November 25 Black Sea/Kerch Strait provocation strategically timed ahead of Ukraine's March 2019 presidential election and this week's G20 summit?

The likely US/UK orchestrated incident was all about escalating East/West tensions, further undermining prospects for Putin/Trump agreement on key bilateral issues, along with whatever the US-installed Poroshenko regime hopes to gain from what happened.

Much rides on Trump's meeting with Xi Jinping. DLT threatened to increase tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese goods from 10 - 25% in January 1 if Beijing doesn't subordinate its economic interests to Washington's.

It clearly won't happen, but it remains to be seen if both leaders can find accommodation middle ground with each other - or at least delay the January 1 action and Trump's added threat to impose duties on all Chinese imports in the new year.

Ahead of Trump's meeting with Xi, Chinese envoy to Washington Cui Tiankai warned of "dire consequences" if both leaders fail to find accommodation with each other, adding:

"The lessons of history are (clear). In the last century, we had two world wars. And in between them, the Great Depression. I don't think anybody should really try to have a repetition of history. These things should never happen again, so people have to act in a responsible way."

Given Washington's rage for confrontation over diplomacy and permanent war agenda, he didn't rule out "all-out conflict" with the US if things deteriorate beyond resolution.

China didn't initiate trade war. It's largely Trump's call on how far to push it or be willing to step back from the brink.

Cui was clear saying

"(w)e cannot accept that one side would put forward a number of demands and the other side just has to satisfy all these things."

According to hardline Trump regime chief economic advisor Larry Kudlow, DLT intends increasing tariffs on Chinese goods if there's no breakthrough in talks with Xi, adding discussions so far failed to yield what the White House demands.

If nothing comes from talks this weekend, Trump said he'll order additional tariffs on another \$267 billion worth of Chinese imports, along with increasing tariffs to 25% - harming both countries and the world economy if he goes this far and sticks with it.

On Monday, he said

“(t)he only deal that would be really acceptable to me – other than obviously we have to do something on the theft of intellectual property, right – but the only deal would be China has to open up their country to competition from the United States.”

“They have to open up China to the United States. Otherwise, I don’t see a deal being made.”

America’s huge and growing trade deficit with China is all about US corporations offshoring their production and other operations, along with millions of jobs, to low-wage countries.

Trump consistently fails to lay blame where it belongs – on corporate America, not China or other countries.

It’s unclear if talks between him and Xi can achieve (or at least appear to achieve) what numerous previous Sino/US rounds failed to accomplish.

Perhaps agreeing on a reprieve is the best to hope for – so talks on major unresolved issues can continue in the new year.

A Final Comment

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said things are “settled” about Putin/Trump talks on the sidelines of this week’s G20 summit – adding “(w)e have no...information otherwise.”

It’s hard imagining both leaders won’t meet. Being in the same place at the same time, it seems virtually certain they’ll meet with much to discuss.

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