

The Trump-Putin Meeting: Establishment of a Personal Relationship, “There was Positive Chemistry Between the Two”

White House Press Briefing

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)
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Region: [Russia and FSU, USA](#)
Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

On July 7 following Trump's meeting with Putin, a US Press Briefing was held at the G-20 in Hamburg.

It is important to analyze the shift in political discourse of both President Trump and Secretary of State Tillerson.

The main contribution of the Trump-Putin meeting was to establish communication at a personal level.

The World is at a dangerous crossroads. That Trump-Putin personal relationship is fundamental.

History tells us that political misunderstandings can lead to war.

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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Press Briefing on the President's Meetings at the G20 | July 7, 2017

PRESS BRIEFING
BY SECRETARY OF STATE TILLERSON
AND SECRETARY OF TREASURY MNUCHIN
ON THE PRESIDENT'S MEETINGS AT THE G20

Hamburg Messe
Hamburg, Germany

Admittedly, no significant shifts in US foreign policy have occurred: the Pentagon's military agenda prevails under the helm of Defense Secretary "Mad Dog" James Mattis. Media lies and political deceit also prevail.

Yet at the same time, discussion and diplomatic exchange have resumed -which in many regards is an important achievement.

" The two leaders, I would say, connected very quickly. There was a very clear positive chemistry between the two. I think, again — and I think the positive thing I observed — and I've had many, many meetings with President Putin before — is there was not a lot of re-litigating of the past. I think both of the leaders feel like there's a lot of things in the past that both of us are unhappy about. We're unhappy, they're unhappy.

I think the perspective of both of them was, this is a really important relationship. Two largest nuclear powers in the world. How do we start making this work? How do we live with one another? How do we work with one another? We simply have to find a way to go forward. And I think that was — that was expressed over and over, multiple times, I think by both Presidents, this strong desire. (Tillerson)

In this regard, a certain sanity in the international relations narrative has been restored, which is acknowledged by President Putin:

As regards personal relations, I [Putin] believe that they have been established. This is how I see it: Mr Trump's television image is very different from the real person; he is a very down to earth and direct person, and he has an absolutely adequate attitude towards the person he is talking with; he analyses things pretty fast and answers the questions he is asked or new ones that arise in the course of the discussion. So I think that if we build our relations in the vein of our yesterday's meeting, there are good reasons to believe that we will be able to revive, at least partially, the level of interaction that we need. (President Putin, Post G-20 Press Conference, July 7, 2017, emphasis added)

It is worth noting that Washington casually admits its mistakes in relation to Russia (as part of a political narrative). In the words of Secretary of State Tillerson:

"So we want to build on the commonality, and we spent a lot of time talking about next steps. And then where there's differences, we have more work to get together and understand. Maybe they've got the right approach and we've got the wrong" (emphasis added)

"The Russia Probe"

The Trump-Putin meeting is also a slap in the face for the Deep State Neocons and the US media -not to mention Hillary et al-, who continue to blame Moscow for having intervened in the 2016 US presidential elections while casually portraying Trump as a Manchurian candidate controlled by the Kremlin.

The "Russia Did It" narrative, which borders on ridicule, is losing ground. In turn, Trump's position has to some extent also been reinforced. Not surprisingly, the US media has slashed

back at Trump accusing him of having been manipulated by Putin. [According to CNN](#) “Putin may have less of a warm diplomatic bedside manner, but he understands the art of presentation and how to set a trap.”

An important threshold has been reached

Has talking to the Kremlin rather than waging war on Russia become the “new normal” (at least at the level of political discourse)?

No. At least not yet.

Nonetheless, an important transition has taken place. Talking to the Kremlin sets a new momentum. It sets a precedent. Something has been achieved: Communication between the Kremlin and the White House. Lest we forget, history tells us that all out war could unfold as a result of a personal political misunderstanding. [Remember World War I.](#)

Michel Chossudovsky, July 9, 2017

[For the complete transcript of the Press Briefing click below](#)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/07/07/press-briefing-presidents-meetings-g20-july-7-2017>

Selected quotes with notes and emphasis

SECRETARY MNUCHIN: Hi, everybody. I just want to highlight very briefly, and then Secretary Tillerson will go on, and then afterwards we’ll both answer a few questions.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you, Steve, and thanks for staying with us late these evening.

President Trump and President Putin met this afternoon for 2 hours and 15 minutes [for a longer period of time than what was initially agreed upon by the two governments] here on the sidelines of the G20. The two leaders exchanged views on the current nature of the U.S.-Russia relationship and the future of the U.S.-Russia relationship.

They discussed important progress that was made in Syria, and I think all of you have seen some of the news that just broke regarding a de-escalation agreement and memorandum, which was agreed between the United States, Russia and Jordan, [this agreement was no doubt drafted before the Trump Putin meeting] for an important area in southwest Syria that affects Jordan’s security, but also is a very complicated part of the Syrian battlefield.

This de-escalation area was agreed, it’s well-defined, agreements on who will secure this area. A ceasefire has been entered into. And I think this is our first indication of the U.S. and Russia being able to work together in Syria. And as a result of that, we had a very lengthy discussion regarding other areas in Syria that we can continue to work together on to de-escalate the areas and violence once we defeat ISIS, and to work together toward a political process that will secure the future of the Syrian people.

As a result, at the request of President Putin, the United States has appointed — and you've seen, I think, the announcement of Special Representative for Ukraine, Ambassador Kurt Volker. Ambassador Volker will draw on his decades of experience in the U.S. Diplomatic Corps, both as a representative to NATO and also his time as a permanent political appointment.

The two leaders also acknowledged the challenges of cyber threats and interference in the democratic processes of the United States and other countries, and agreed to explore creating a framework around which the two countries can work together to better understand how to deal with these cyber threats, both in terms of how these tools are used to interfere with the internal affairs of countries, but also how these tools are used to threaten infrastructure, how these tools are used from a terrorism standpoint as well.

The President opened the meeting with President Putin by raising the concerns of the American people regarding Russian interference in the 2016 election. They had a very robust and lengthy exchange on the subject. The President pressed President Putin on more than one occasion regarding Russian involvement. President Putin denied such involvement, as I think he has in the past.

The two leaders agreed, though, that this is a substantial hindrance in the ability of us to move the Russian-U.S. relationship forward, and agreed to exchange further work regarding commitments of non-interference in the affairs of the United States and our democratic process as well as those of other countries. So more work to be done on that regard.

Q Mr. Secretary, Nick Waters (ph) from Bloomberg News. Can you tell us whether President Trump said whether there would be any consequences for Russia to the interference in the U.S. election? Did he spell out any specific consequences that Russia would face? And then also, on the Syria ceasefire, when does it begin? And what makes you think the ceasefire will succeed this time when past U.S.-Russian agreements on a ceasefire have failed?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: With regard to the interference in the election, I think the President took note of actions that have been discussed by the Congress. Most recently, additional sanctions that have been voted out of the Senate to make it clear as to the seriousness of the issue. But I think what the two Presidents, I think rightly, focused on is how do we move forward; how do we move forward from here. Because it's not clear to me that we will ever come to some agreed-upon resolution of that question between the two nations.

So the question is, what do we do now? And I think the relationship — and the President made this clear, as well — is too important, and it's too important to not find a way to move forward — not dismissing the issue in any way, and I don't want to leave you with that impression. And that is why we've agreed to continue engagement and discussion around how do we secure a commitment that the Russian government has no intention of and will not interfere in our affairs in the future, nor the affairs of others, and how do we create a framework in which we have some capability to judge what is happening in the cyber world and who to hold accountable. And this is obviously an issue that's broader than just U.S.-Russia, but certainly we see the manifestation of that threat in the events of last year.

And so I think, again, the Presidents rightly focused on how do we move forward from what may be simply an intractable disagreement at this point.

As to the Syria ceasefire, I would say what may be different this time, I think, is the level of commitment on the part of the Russian government. They see the situation in Syria transitioning from the defeat of ISIS, which we are progressing rapidly, as you know. And this is what really has led to this discussion with them as to what do we do to stabilize Syria once the war against ISIS is won.

And Russia has the same, I think, interest that we do in having Syria become a stable place, a unified place, but ultimately a place where we can facilitate a political discussion about their future, including the future leadership of Syria.

So I think part of why we're — and again, we'll see what happens as to the ability to hold the ceasefire. But I think part of what's different is where we are relative to the whole war against ISIS, where we are in terms of the opposition's, I think, position as to their strength within the country, and the regime itself.

In many respects, people are getting tired. They're getting weary of the conflict. And I think we have an opportunity, we hope, to create the conditions in this area, and the south is I think our first show of success. We're hoping we can replicate that elsewhere.

MR. SPICER: Abby.

Q Mr. Secretary, you spoke, when you were speaking of the ceasefire, about they're being detailed information about who would enforce it. Can you give any more information on what conclusions were reached? And you spoke of the future leadership of Syria. Do you still believe that Assad has no role in their government?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: I would like to defer on the specific roles in particular of security forces on the ground, because there is — there are a couple of more meetings to occur. This agreement, I think as you're aware, was entered into between Jordan, the United States, and Russia. And we are — we have a very clear picture of who will provide the security forces, but we have a few more details to work out. And if I could, I'd like to defer on that until that is completed.

I expect that will be completed within the next — less than a week. The talks are very active and ongoing.

And your second question again?

Q Does the administration still believe that Assad has no role in the future government of Syria?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Yes, our position continues to be that we see no long-term role for the Assad family or the Assad regime. And we have made this clear to everyone — we've certainly made it clear in our discussions with Russia — that we do not think Syria can achieve international recognition in the future. Even if they work through a successful political process, the international community simply is not going to accept a Syria led by the Assad regime.

[Points to the insistence of Washington on regime change, Will that position be in any

way modified?]

And so if Syria is to be accepted and have a secure — both a secure and economic future, it really requires that they find new leadership. We think it will be difficult for them to attract both the humanitarian aid, as well as the reconstruction assistance that's going to be required, because there just will be such a low level of confidence in the Assad government. So that continues to be the view.

And as we've said, how Assad leaves is yet to be determined, but our view is that somewhere in that political process there will be a transition away from the Assad family.

Q Thank you. Demetri Sevastopulo, Financial Times. On North Korea, did President Putin agree to do anything to help the U.S. to put more pressure on North Korea? And secondly, you seem to have reached somewhat of an impasse with China in terms of getting them to put more pressure on North Korea. How are you going to get them to go beyond what they've done already? And what is President Trump going to say to President Xi on that issue tomorrow?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: We did have a pretty good exchange on North Korea. I would say the Russians see it a little differently than we do, so we're going to continue those discussions and ask them to do more.

Russia does have economic activity with North Korea, but I would also hasten to add Russia's official policy is the same as ours — a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

And so I think here, again, there is a difference in terms of view around tactics and pace, and so we will continue to work with them to see if we cannot persuade them as to the urgency that we see.

I think with respect to China, what our experience with China has been — and I've said this to others — it's been a bit uneven. China has taken significant action, and then I think for a lot of different reasons, they paused and didn't take additional action. They then have taken some steps, and then they paused. And I think in our own view there are a lot of, perhaps, explanations for why those pauses occur. But we've remained very closely engaged with China, both through our dialogues that have occurred face-to-face, but also on the telephone. We speak very frequently with them about the situation in North Korea.

So there's a clear understanding between the two of us of our intent. And I think the sanctions action that was taken here just in last week to 10 days certainly got their attention in terms of their understanding our resolve to bring more pressure to bear on North Korea by directly going after entities doing business with North Korea, regardless of where they may be located. We've continued to make that clear to China that we would prefer they take the action themselves. And we're still calling upon them to do that.

So I would say our engagement is unchanged with China, and our expectations are unchanged.

Q And you haven't given up hope?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: No, we have not given up hope. When you're in an approach like we're using — and I call it the peaceful pressure campaign. A lot of people like to characterize it otherwise, but this is a campaign to lead us to a peaceful resolution. Because if this fails, we don't have very many good options left. And so it is a peaceful pressure campaign, and it's one that requires calculated increases in pressure, allow the regime to respond to that pressure. And it takes a little time to let these things happen. You enact the pressure; it takes a little while for that to work its way through.

So it is going to require some level of patience as we move this along, but when we talk about our strategic patience ending, what we mean is we're not going to just sit idly by, and we're going to follow this all the way to its conclusion.

Q Thank you. Mr. Secretary, I have issue — you just mentioned on the DPRK. We note China and Russia recently said — they asked North Korea to stop the — to freeze, actually, the nuclear activities, and also they asked the U.S. to stop the deployment of THAAD system. So did President Putin bring up his concern about the deployment of THAAD system? And also, what's the expectation of President Trump on tomorrow's meeting with President Xi Jinping, other than the DPRK issue? Thank you.

SECRETARY TILLERSON: The subject of THAAD did not come up in the meeting with President Putin.

In terms of the progress of North Korea and this last missile launch, again, those are some of the differences of views we have between ourselves in terms of tactics — how to deal with this. President Putin, I think, has expressed a view not unlike that of China, that they would support a freeze for freeze.

If we study the history of the last 25 years of engagement with various regimes in North Korea, this has been done before. And every time it was done, North Korea went ahead and proceeded with its program.

The problem with freezing now — if we freeze where they are today, we freeze their activities with a very high level of capability. And we do not think it also sets the right tone for where these talks should begin. And so we're asking North Korea to be prepared to come to the table with an understanding that these talks are going to be about how do we help you chart a course to cease and roll back your nuclear program? That's what we want to talk about. We're not interested in talking about how do we have you stop where you are today. Because stopping where they are today is not acceptable to us.

...

SECRETARY TILLERSON: And the national security advisor's office.

As to the nature of the 2 hours and 15 minutes, first let me characterize — the meeting was very constructive. The two leaders, I would say, connected very quickly. There was a very clear positive chemistry between the two. I think, again — and I think the positive thing I observed — and I've had many, many meetings with President Putin before — is there was not a lot of re-litigating of the past. I think both of the leaders feel like there's a lot of things in the past that both of us are unhappy about. We're unhappy, they're unhappy.

I think the perspective of both of them was, this is a really important relationship. Two largest nuclear powers in the world. It's a really important relationship. How do we start making this work? How do we live with one another? How do we work with one another? We simply have to find a way to go forward. And I think that was — that was expressed over and over, multiple times, I think by both Presidents, this strong desire.

It is a very complicated relationship today because there are so many issues on the table. And one of the reasons it took a long time, I think, is because once they met and got acquainted with one another fairly quickly, there was so much to talk about — all these issues. Just about everything got touched on to one degree or another. And I think there was just such a level of engagement and exchange, and neither one of them wanted to stop. Several times I had to remind the President, and people were sticking their heads in the door. And I think they even — they sent in the First Lady at one point to see if she could get us out of there, and that didn't work either. (Laughter.)

But I think — what I've described to you, the 2 hours and 15 minutes, it was an extraordinarily important meeting. I mean, there's just — there's so much for us to talk about. And it was a good start. Now, I will tell you we spent a very, very lengthy period on Syria, with a great amount of detailed exchange on the agreement we had concluded today — it was announced — but also where we go, and trying to get much greater clarity around how we see this playing out and how Russia sees it playing out, and where do we share a common view and where do we have a difference, and do we have the same objectives in mind.

And I would tell you that, by and large, our objectives are exactly the same. How we get there, we each have a view. But there's a lot more commonality to that than there are differences. So we want to build on the commonality, and we spent a lot of time talking about next steps. And then where there's differences, we have more work to get together and understand. Maybe they've got the right approach and we've got the wrong approach. [a strong statement by US Secretary of State]

So there was a substantial amount of time spent on Syria, just because we've had so much activity going on with it.

Q Thank you very much. Mr. Secretary, can you say if the President was unequivocal in his view that Russia did interfere in the election? Did he offer to produce any evidence or to convince Mr. Putin?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: The Russians have asked for proof and evidence. I'll leave that to the intelligence community to address the answer to that question. And again, I think the President, at this point, he pressed him and then felt like at this point let's talk about how do we go forward. And I think that was the right place to spend our time, rather than spending a lot of time having a disagreement that everybody knows we have a disagreement.

MR. SPICER: Thank you, guys, very much. Have a great evening.

END

7:41 P.M. CET

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