

Will War-Avoidance Paradigm Extend to Iran Crisis Next?

by Nancy Spannaus and Jeffrey Steinberg

Sept. 24—As the United Nations gathering of world leaders begins today, hopes are high that the agreements reached 10 days ago between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry for defusing the danger of a wider conflagration resulting from the Syria war will be solidified and expanded. That agreement, forced upon the British and the Obama Administration by institutional forces in their nations, determined to abort the danger of thermo-nuclear war, represents a huge opening for the replacement of the policies that have led to war and dictatorial, genocidal measures to dominate the planet, especially since the onset of the George W. Bush Administration.

Developments since the Sept. 14 agreement in Geneva show both its fragility, and the determination of war-avoidance factions throughout the world to consolidate the shift away from global confrontation, and expand that policy shift to other hotspots, particularly Iran.

A Grand Bargain with Iran?

If the Syria deal is implemented, the potential for even greater shifts is immediately on the table, including the possibility of a long-overdue grand bargain with Iran. The new Iranian government of President Hassan Rouhani, with his offers to “engage in constructive interaction with the world,” has brought significant attention to this potential.

President Rouhani has clearly signaled that his gov-

ernment is prepared to reach an agreement with the P5+1 (the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) and with the United States bilaterally. Last week, Presidents Rouhani and Obama exchanged letters setting the basis for direct negotiations. Iran’s Foreign Minister arrived in New York City on Sept. 19 and immediately began consultations with many governments in preparation for the UN General Assembly and the upcoming P5+1 talks.

Also on Sept. 19, Rouhani gave an interview to U.S. TV in which he stressed that Iran is “solely seeking peaceful nuclear technology”—a commitment that has, in fact, been underscored in a *fatwa* against seeking nuclear weapons, issued by Iran’s top religious institutions.

Then, on Sept. 20, Rouhani contributed an op-ed in the *Washington Post* in which he elaborated on his desire to “to engage in constructive interaction with the world.” He argued strongly for the end of the “age of blood feuds,” and the rejection of the “use of brute force,” the “Cold War mentality,” and the pursuit of “one’s interests without considering the interests of others.”

Stating that his approach to foreign policy seeks to resolve problems such as those that plague Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, through fostering national dialogue, he offered to aid in facilitating that process. His positive orientation is underscored in the following statement:

“We and our international counterparts have spent a

lot of time—perhaps too much time—discussing what we don't want rather than what we do want. This is not unique to Iran's international relations. In a climate where much of foreign policy is a direct function of domestic politics, focusing on what one doesn't want is an easy way out of difficult conundrums for many world leaders. Expressing what one does want requires more courage."

The Iranian President then applied that approach to the question of Iran's nuclear program and relations with the United States. "We all need to muster the courage to start conveying what we want—clearly, concisely and sincerely—and to back it up with the political will to take necessary action. This is the essence of my approach to constructive interaction."

If a grand bargain with Iran can be reached with a cornered Obama Administration under increasing control by patriotic elements of the institution of the Presidency, this can also pave the way for realization of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, the development program that China is pursuing, and that the LaRouche movement has elaborated programmatically since the mid-1990s. The U.S. and NATO are leaving Afghanistan, and any plan for stability in that crucial part of the world is premised on regional cooperation involving Russia, China, the Central Asian states, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Iran.

Institutional Backup

Since the election of President Rouhani on July 14, there has been an increasingly vocal section of the U.S. establishment advocating a diplomatic approach to Iran, in which the West would drop sanctions in response to certain guarantees, and Iran might even be brought into the Geneva II discussions on resolving the Syrian crisis.

On July 16, twenty-nine former diplomats and military figures issued a letter to the Obama Administration urging a new diplomatic approach to the Iranian government. More suprisingly, on July 19, no fewer than 131 U.S. Congressmen, including 17 Republicans, signed a letter to the Administration urging a similar approach.

Since then, the push for a new approach to Iran has expanded beyond the nuclear issue, to Syria. Calls for bringing Iran into negotiations for peace in Syria have been issued by leading British political figures (Labour Party Shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander has said the same thing, and senior British Liberal Democratic Party peer Lady Williams), and a host of



UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

President Obama addresses the UN General Assembly, Sept. 24, 2013. He ripped into the concept of national sovereignty, if it provides an "excuse" for the international community not to "act." Will sane forces in the U.S. government box him in and block the imperial drive toward war?

U.S. policymakers and influentials. Bill Keller, a *New York Times* columnist and its managing editor until recently, called in his Sept. 16 column, "The Missing Partner," for Iran to be invited to the Geneva talks.

The same proposal has come from the International Crisis Group; the new online Mideast intelligence journal *Al-Monitor* (www.al-monitor.com), and their well-known Syria specialist, Barbara Slavin. *Al-Monitor's* editor and CEO, Andrew Parasiliti, wrote an op-ed for *Time* magazine saying essentially the same thing, in the same period.

This is some of the background to what Obama said in his ABC-TV interview on Sept. 15, where he twice hinted in general terms at the advantages of Iranian participation in negotiations on Syria.

Potential Roadblocks

Despite what appears to be broad support for resolving both the Syrian and Iranian crisis through diplomacy, however, the war faction within the Obama Administration, and associated British Empire-controlled groupings in Europe and the Gulf states (notably Saudi Arabia and Qatar), continue to try to sabotage the Syria peace conference. This sabotage has been playing out at

the United Nations, where a Security Council resolution in support of the Kerry-Lavrov deal has been blocked by the insistence from France, the United States, and Great Britain that a threat of military force against Syria be included in it. Russia has steadfastly resisted such an inclusion, noting that the rules governing Syria's accession to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) should be governed by that body, and any violations dealt with accordingly.

Such sabotage has drawn a sharp response from the Russian government. Foreign Minister Lavrov said in a Sept. 22 interview on Russian TV's *Vremya* program: "Our American partners are starting to blackmail us: If Russia does not support a resolution under Chapter 7, then we will withdraw our support for Syria's entry into the OPCW. This is a complete departure from what I agreed with Secretary of State John Kerry." Chapter 7 of the UN charter would allow military intervention in Syria.

Lavrov said he was surprised by the West's "negligent" approach. "Our partners are blinded by an ideological mission for regime change," said Lavrov. "They cannot admit they have made another mistake."

He attacked the previous interventions in Libya and Iraq, and said that military intervention could only lead to a catastrophe in the region. If the West really was interested in a peaceful solution to the conflict that has raged for over two years, it would now be pushing for Syria's entry into the OPCW in the first place, not for the ouster of President Bashar Assad, *Russia Today* reported. "I am convinced that the West is doing this to demonstrate that they call the shots in the Middle East. This is a totally politicized approach," said Lavrov.

A military strike would bring the militants to power and Syria would no longer be a secular state. Up to three quarters "of these guys are jihadists," including the most radical groups such as al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, which want to create an Islamic Caliphate in Syria and in neighboring territories, Lavrov said.

"If our Western partners think at least two steps ahead, they cannot but understand it," Lavrov added. As to why the West would want an intervention, Moscow has so far received no clear answer, he said. It is hearing "mantras" on the necessity to promote democracy and protect human rights. This is important, but not to care about stability in a key world region is absolutely irresponsible, Lavrov said.



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is emphasizing his readiness "to engage in constructive interaction with the world."

Who Used Chemical Weapons?

Meanwhile, progress on the accession of Syria to the OPCW proceeds. President Assad has appeared on Western television to both deny his government's use of the weapons, and to agree to the UN chemical weapons treaty, and Syria has turned over the preliminary paperwork for admission to the OPCW. Inspectors from the UN are anticipated to return to Syria for further work, on other alleged chemical warfare attacks, on Sept. 25.

Meanwhile, the Russians and others have kept raising questions about the authorship of the chemical attack in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta, Syria, on Aug. 21. In a visit to Damascus Sept. 18, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov announced that the Syrian government has given Russia evidence that the attack was carried out by the jihadi rebels, *not* the Assad government.

One aspect of the evidence, pertaining to the rocket parts with Cyrillic lettering found by the UN inspectors in the Ghouta area, has cast even more doubt on the idea that the Assad government could have launched a chemical attack in the area.

On Sept. 17, the Russian news agency RIA-Novosti reported the evaluation of the director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Ruslan Pukhov, that the parts of Soviet-made munitions found by UN inspectors near Damascus belong to projectiles used in multiple-launch missile systems that the Syrian

army took out of service long ago, and have probably been improvised to carry chemicals. Pukhov noted that the rockets were identifiable by their serial numbers, and were produced in the 1950s and '60s.

The same issue was taken up in a Sept. 22 article in the London *Independent* by respected British Middle East journalist Robert Fisk. Fisk wrote that if the Russian assertions of the date that the gas shells were manufactured are true—although he complained that the evidence has not been made public—they would have been manufactured in 1967, and exported to Yemen, Egypt, or Libya—not Syria. He went on to discuss the dispersion of weapons from Libya since the fall of Qaddafi in 2011.

Fisk then cited numerous other sources he interviewed, including UN and international officials in the region, expressing “grave doubts” that Assad’s Army fired sarin gas missiles.

Similar doubts about Assad’s authorship of the attack were raised by noted Israeli journalist Ben Caspit in a Sept. 11 article in *Al-Monitor*. Caspit cites an unnamed former Israeli Defense Forces intelligence officer whom he considered qualified, saying that it was unlikely the attack came from the Syrian Army. “According to my source, most of the complaints and reports on the ground, from the mouths of the victims or their relatives, describe chemical gas characteristics that do not typify sarin, the gas used by the Syria Army.”

Other Sabotage

Any objective reporting on the authorship of the chemical weapons attack, of course, is being rejected by the the British Empire’s forces, including the Obama Administration and the Persian Gulf states, on the basis of their predetermined conclusion. These forces, particularly the Saudis, have gone into a flight forward, to try to maintain the war momentum in the region, utilizing the array of jihadi terrorist forces built up by the British Empire over decades.

A foretaste of that offensive was evident in the terrorist offensive that hit Southwest Asia and Africa over the weekend of Sept. 22, when more than 200 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Kenya, Iraq, and Pakistan. In every case, the perpetrators can be traced to the Saudi-British nexus, which is determined to use sectarian war to destroy the nation-state system, and create global chaos—preventing any lasting solution to the current crisis.

A Lasting Solution

Ultimately, the potential for a lasting shift out of a world of war, depression, and chaos depends upon the removal of the Anglo-Dutch oligarchical system from power. This system maintains a vise-grip over global finance and economy, despite the relative economic success of China and some other Asian countries. The key to breaking that grip is reinstatement of the Glass-Steagall law in the United States, and then a bankruptcy reorganization of the global financial system, leading to a New Bretton Woods agreement based on national banking systems that use sovereign credit to fund great projects such as the Eurasian Land-Bridge and the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA XXI).

Lyndon LaRouche addressed this question in his Sept. 20 webcast, when asked about the potential of the paradigm shift underway. The current war avoidance moves will “not solve the problem,” LaRouche said. “Because when you come to the point that the existence of society depends upon thermonuclear fusion [power], you no longer have the option of simply negotiating peace.

“So, the idea that this is an opportunity to avoid collision, doesn’t work. Because the problem is, if you don’t develop thermonuclear fusion, now, we’re not going to be able to maintain an assured defense of the existence of the human species. Therefore, while the peace orientation as I’ve just summed it up, yes, that is necessary. But what’s the positive basis for it? The fact that you refrain from doing something bad, does not mean that you’re going to do something good. So you have to have a driver of self-interest, which goes beyond these kinds of considerations. And what we need to do, is drive now, and stop this nonsense, and get a thermonuclear fusion driver!”

What we need, LaRouche said, is to get rid of the system of empire, which is driving the push toward war.

“And therefore, we need projects which do a multiple number of things that we need done. We need to protect man, now, as a species! We need to free man from the slavery that Wall Street merely typifies. *Shut down Wall Street!* It doesn’t earn anything, it’s not good for anything! If it doesn’t do anything of good, it’s an accident. We need bigger accidents of that kind, to take them out. We need the *end of the oligarchical system!* And if we don’t get that, then the very weapons which we could use to save mankind, would be used by mankind against itself.”