

I. Steps in the Right Direction

Putin-Biden Step Back from the Abyss, In Sober View of Nuclear War Threat

by Harley Schlanger

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June 18—Significant importance of the June 16 summit between U.S. and Russian Presidents Biden and Putin comes from an action by these leaders which was unexpected by geopoliticians and pundits beforehand, and has been widely ignored in U.S. and European media coverage of that summit since. That action was the re-adoption by the two Presidents in their own names in the summit communiqué, of the exact language renouncing nuclear war—“it cannot be won, and must never be fought”—of President Ronald Reagan and Chairman Mikhail Gorbachev in their 1985 summit, also held in Geneva, Switzerland. Schiller Institute President Helga Zepp-LaRouche had called for this urgent step back from a military confrontation, which appeared to be reaching a peak around Ukraine in April. Also calling for such a step back were the American Committee for a U.S.-Russia Accord, and the Euro-Atlantic Leadership Group.

Given the harsh words and shrill tone from the Biden team preceding his meeting with Russian President Putin on June 16, it seemed realistic that both sides were lowering expectations in pre-summit pronouncements. In the days before the summit,



President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet in summit in Geneva, Switzerland on June 16, 2021.

Biden met with G7 leaders and NATO officials to create an impression of a united front against the “threats” posed by Russia and China. His spokesmen repeatedly painted a picture of an “Alliance of Democratic States” prepared to confront “autocratic regimes,” in defense of an arbitrary “rules-based order” (RBO) unified by adherence to “western values”—values which are under attack due to the “malign intent” allegedly demonstrated by Russia and China.

Following the NATO summit in Brussels, Biden said, “Russia and China are both seeking to drive a wedge in our transatlantic solidarity ... but NATO is rock solid and unshakeable.” In the final communiqué, Russia is repeatedly identified as an “ag-



Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, November 10, 1986.

gressor” and China as presenting a “systemic challenge,” both posing a threat to the RBO. In the face of this threat, it states, NATO “stands by its international commitments,” especially regarding Russia, which was accused of continuing “to breach the values, principles, trust and commitment outlined” in the documents defining the Russia-NATO relationship.

“The U.S. is back,” Biden enthused time and again, and the others agreed, referring to the fact that the G7, in the past, had been able to shape the global agenda, based on U.S. military and economic power. The apparent unity achieved in these two summits would allow him to confidently “draw red lines” in his meeting with Putin.

Yet, cutting through all the platitudes in the flood of words served up by participants at the G7 and NATO summits was a simple statement issued by the Chinese Embassy in London: “The days when global decisions were dictated by a small group of countries are long gone.” This comment in particular shreds one of the

conceits bandied about by members of the G7 “Club,” that this summit marked a return to “multilateralism,” highlighted by the presence of the United States after the Trump interregnum. To put things in perspective, when the G7 was founded, in 1975, the member countries represented 80% of the world’s GDP; but today, it is just over 30%, according to Statista.com. In terms of population, the seven countries account for less than 10% of the world’s total. Thus, while the “seven dwarfs” (as Lyndon LaRouche called them) made a show of unity in Cornwall, England, there were legitimate concerns over their ability to impose their will on the world, and underneath the surface disagreements emerged, especially on how “tough” to be against China, exemplified by a push-back from Germany, France and Italy.

The demand that nations nonetheless submit to this new order discredits their claim of commitment to “multilateralism.” The proceedings of the G7 summit were shaped not in accordance with principles of international law, but by the arbitrary design of the financial,

U.S.: Biden and Xi Will Confer Soon

June 18—U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, in a June 17 on-the-record [call](#) with reporters, said that President Joe Biden would follow up on his summit with Vladimir Putin, with a discussion with China’s Xi Jinping. The White House transcript quoted Sullivan:

[T]he notion that President Biden will engage in the coming month with President Xi in some way, to take stock of where we are in the relationship and to ensure that we have that kind of direct communication that we found valuable with President Putin yesterday, we’re very much committed to that. It’s now just a question of when and how.

The question had been posed to Sullivan: After Russia, does that mean “you can go on to a bilateral discussion with President Xi and how’re you taking that on?” Sullivan elaborated:

What the President said, about there being no substitute for leader-level dialogue as a central part of why he held the summit with Putin yesterday, also applies to China and to President Xi Jinping. He will look for opportunities to engage with President Xi going forward. We don’t have any particular plans at the moment, but I would note that both leaders are likely to be at the G20 in Italy in October.... We will sit down to work out the right modality for the two presidents to engage.

Sullivan referred to two modalities—possibly by phone or by a side-meeting at an international meeting, or “something else.”

The Chinese Foreign Ministry, in a June 17 [comment](#) on the Biden-Putin summit, stressed that Russia and America “reaffirmed the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Spokesman Zhou Lijian said China “has been working to bring the five nuclear weapon states to reaffirm this principle so as to reduce the risk of nuclear war and safeguard global strategic stability.” China, he said, will “stand ready to have bilateral dialogue with relevant sides with mutual respect and on an equal footing.”

intelligence, security and diplomatic communities of London and Washington, in tandem with the think-tanks and non-governmental organizations financed by the same military-industrial complex making strategic decisions. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced months ago that the G7 would be the coming-out party for “Global Britain,” a thinly disguised new imperial order at the center of the RBO. The Biden team was not only fully in step, but has been claiming ownership of this concept.



DoS/Ron Przynsuka

Meeting in Reykjavik on May 19, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken (left) and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (right) finalized the plans for the June 16 Biden-Putin Summit.

Resounding ‘No’ to Nuclear War

Given this background, it was perhaps a shock to the Russophobes that a “Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability,” issued after the summit, included the exact language of a previous U.S.-Russia summit, between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in November 1985, which is credited by many as providing the basis for the peaceful resolution of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Putin-Biden statement states, “Today, we reaffirm the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Included in the statement is an agreement to establish a bilateral “Strategic Stability Dialogue” to address security issues facing both nations.

Other positive developments from the summit include the return of ambassadors to each nation, after they had been recalled at the height of the recent crisis over Ukraine; Biden’s reference to the Minsk Protocol, indicating the prospect of a revival of diplomacy to resolve tensions regarding Ukraine, based on an agreement which continues to be sabotaged by Ukraine; and an agreement to begin “consultations on cybersecurity.” The latter is a concession by Biden following Putin’s denial that Russia is responsible for repeated cyber-attacks on U.S. infrastructure. The Biden Administration has repeatedly used “talking points” accusing Russia of sponsoring and protecting “cyber-terrorists” engaged in such attacks—from election “interference” in 2016 and 2020, to ransomware attacks on U.S. and allied corporations—all charges having been made without evidence.

In separate press conferences, both leaders offered cautious assessments of their engagement. Putin said,

“Our meeting took place in a constructive spirit,” adding that “... both sides expressed their intention to understand each other and to seek common ground.” Biden said, “The tone of the entire meeting was good and positive,” and that he recognizes that Putin does not want a “Cold War.”

This outcome was shaped by a series of events that preceded the week of summits, which represented a flank against the standard line of imperial geopolitical attacks. These included a two-hour May 19 meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, described as “productive and cordial,” in finalizing the plans for the June 16 summit; and the announcement that day by Blinken, of the waiver of sanctions against the lead company involved in the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and its CEO, Matthias Warnig. Though it was much condemned by U.S. media and war hawks in both U.S. political parties, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov described the Nord Stream 2 decision as “a glimmer of normalcy in American politics,” creating the prospect of a “normalization of our bilateral ties.” On May 25, a meeting occurred between Nikolai Patrushev, the Secretary of Russia’s Security Council, and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, which was reported favorably by both parties.

In addition, there were interventions by associations representing leading officials from U.S., NATO, and Russian diplomatic, political and military circles, which explicitly called attention to the danger of nuclear war.

Most important was the June 6 statement from the Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group. It begins, “Today, there is a growing risk of—and a potentially catastrophic inattention to—a security crisis involving an escalation or miscalculation leading to nuclear use.” This statement, and a similar one from the American Committee for U.S.-Russian Accord, both call for reasserting the pledge from the Reagan-Gorbachev summit that a nuclear war “must never be fought.” This theme was also the focus of several major conferences sponsored by the Schiller Institute, which included participants from the U.S., Russia, China and Europe.

The Empire Strikes Back!

The response of the unified war party represented by the U.S. and British mainstream media to these developments, demonstrates their intent to undermine the fragile progress achieved. They badgered Biden over what they considered to be his softness in response to Putin, reminiscent of the hammering they gave President Trump following his summit with Putin in Helsinki in July 2018. Typical is the coverage by *Washington Post* scribbler E.J. Dionne, who wrote that the summit enhanced “Putin’s profile” and “threatened to overshadow Biden’s participation in summits with allies,” which he characterized as a “broadly successful effort to refurbish the United States’ alliances with its longtime friends in Europe.” In an editorial, the same newspaper concluded that “there’s no reason to believe the outcome will vary from previous U.S. attempts at cooperation with Mr. Putin.”

More chilling was *The Economist’s* summary, speaking on behalf of the City of London neo-liberals. Putin needs a form of detente with America, it charged, “so he can focus on the more urgent business of repressing dissent and rebuilding his empire.” It described Putin as the leader of a kleptocratic regime “dominated by violent security services, ... [one] that cares more about wealth than ideology, and is preoccupied with its own survival rather than a global contest with America, let alone the interests of the Russian people.” Putin’s regime “thrives on disorder,” it concluded, accusing Russia of having invaded neighboring countries, “poisoned its opponents, and waged cyber- and information-warfare against the West.” So, *The Economist* warned, “the danger is that Mr. Biden’s tough-sounding rhetoric will be a substitute for tough action rather than a precursor of it.”

Likely in response to this pushback, Biden presented a less optimistic assessment on the plane ride

home, pivoting to the theme of some of the war hawks: playing off Russia against China. He asserted that Russia is in a “very, very difficult spot right now. They are being squeezed by China. They want desperately to remain a great power.... You’re in a situation where your economy is struggling, you need to move it in a more aggressive way.” Though acknowledging that Putin does not want a Cold War with America, Biden demeaned Russia in language echoing that of his former boss, Barack Obama, by saying “they desperately want to be relevant.”

The ‘LaRouche Doctrine’

The “baby-step” achieved in the Geneva summit will go nowhere without a radical break from the paradigm shaped by the tradition of British geopolitics and the imposition of neo-liberal economics. The pledge to reject nuclear war, useful though it is, is meaningless if those who shaped the G7 and NATO summits as a confrontation between “The Alliance of Democratic States” and “autocratic regimes” continue to control the agenda. Looking back at the 1985 summit between Reagan and Gorbachev which originated that pledge, one cannot help but reflect on the opportunity presented by the collapse of the Soviet Union to achieve a lasting peace, which was lost, as the geopolitical divisions which created the Cold War persisted, concretized by the assertions of the George Bush, Sr. regime that a “new world order” was coming into being, premised on the unilateral agenda imposed by U.S. military power.

In a prescient effort to counter the efforts of the geopoliticians to sustain their failed paradigm, Lyndon LaRouche in March 1984 drafted “The LaRouche Doctrine: Draft Memorandum of Agreement Between the U.S. and the USSR.” Written one year after Reagan’s adoption of LaRouche’s formulation for the joint deployment by the United States and USSR of an anti-missile defense system, and a year before the Reagan-Gorbachev pledge to reject nuclear war, LaRouche’s [proposal](#) for building on a fragile basis is highly relevant now following the Putin-Biden summit. He wrote,

The political foundation for durable peace must be: a) the unconditional sovereignty of each and all nation-states, and b) cooperation among sovereign nation-states to the effect of promoting unlimited opportunities to participate in the benefits of technological progress, to the mutual benefit of each and all.