

Answer to Question

The Russian-American Summit in Helsinki

(Translated)

Question:

The presidents of the United States and Russia held their summit in Helsinki, the capital of Finland, on Monday 16/7/2018. Does this mean that the tension between the two countries is over? Is there a significance of holding this summit after the summit of the NATO countries on 12/7/2018 and the tension that surfaced between America and its European allies? Does it have an impact on the Russian-Chinese relationship? Is there any impact of this summit on the settlement in Syria?

Answer:

In response to these questions about the US-Russian summit in Helsinki, we say: that after a relatively long period of tension in the US-Russian relations, which began in 2014 when Russia annexed the Crimea, and America and Europe responded by imposing economic sanctions on Russia. And the tension between the two countries intensified with the end of the Obama administration which accused Russia of interfering in the US elections for the benefit of candidate Trump, since then it suspended in practice the high-level meetings between the two sides... Although the two presidents met twice before this summit; they met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany in July 2017, and they met on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) in Vietnam in November 2017.

However, those meetings did not rise to a summit level; they were brief meetings and did not discuss in depth the hot files between them. During the one-and-a-half-year period of Trump's administration, Russia actively sought a summit between the two presidents, but the US was postponing it, and was taking the postponement as a means of pressure on Russia. Russia has been waiting for Trump's initiative to improve relations between them, but it was aware of the difficulties of doing so because of a major wave of opposition to President Trump's direction. The impact of this emerged during the open investigations against Russia and the resignations of Trump's group members over alleged ties with Russia.

Thus, a full-scale meeting at the summit level has become a great Russian dream that Russia has failed to achieve. It only became possible after America agreed to it: "US National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis announced last Thursday 21/6/2018 that US President national security adviser, Bolton, will visit Moscow at the end of this month and will discuss the organization for a Russia-American summit." Russian Sputnik Agency 24/6/2018. **Therefore, the most important thing to consider at this summit, held on 16/7/2018 is why did America decided (not Russia) to hold the summit between the two presidents, and what does it want to achieve from it? To illustrate this, we say:**

1- All indicators indicate the continuation of US pressure on Russia. Two days before the summit, the US accused the Russian intelligence officers of being involved in the piracy of US elections: "The US Justice Department has accused 12 Russian intelligence officers of hacking the accounts of Democratic Party officials during the 2016 presidential election, according to Rod Rosenstein, the deputy justice minister, that the defendants used the messages of penetration known as "phishing" and malicious software... The White House said that the meeting between Trump and Putin on Monday will go ahead." Egyptian Al-Ghad newspaper 14/7/2018. As soon as the Trump-Putin Summit was completed in Helsinki, al-Jazeera reported on 16/7/2018, America's announcement of the arrest of a Russian woman in Washington on charges of spying to Russia. With these actions carried out by the US government agencies, the easing of pressure on Russia is not expected to be achieved as

Russia wants, despite the summit between the two presidents. **This means that there are other factors that pushed America to accept Russia's old new request for a summit between Presidents Trump and Putin. These factors are illustrated by the circumstances of the summit...**

2- The US-Russian summit took place in a circumstance in which America is engaged in a trade war against two major rivals, the European Union and China, and it seems that America decided to hold the summit to play the Russian card against the two rivals together!

Regarding the European Union, America chose the timing of the summit meeting with Russia immediately after the summit of the NATO countries, which was held in Brussels amid great differences between the European Union and America. "The NATO summit was launched in Brussels today amid expectations that it will be fraught with tension, especially between Washington and its European allies on the background of differences on trade and defense spending and the Iranian nuclear agreement. The NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg acknowledged the existence of "differences and different views among the allies" (Russia Today, 11/7/2018), and US President Trump described the European Union as the "opponent" publicly for the first time in the history of relations between both sides of the Atlantic. The summit with Russia was one of the most important instruments of American pressure against the Europeans. And this is how:

A- US President Trump has threatened the Europeans with Russia's appeasement regarding the Ukraine, President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, said that: "the US President Donald Trump had told him that the motives of Russia's policy towards Ukraine were of interest to him, Trump admitted that his enthusiasm towards the Ukraine is a lot less, Tusk added in his interview with TVN24, the Polish channel: "In several conversations with me, President Trump did not hide that he felt less enthusiasm for Ukraine and more understanding of what Russia did in Ukraine," (Russia Today, 15/7/2018) What made things worse is that the US president announced at the G7 Summit in June: "That the Crimea belongs to Russia, because everyone there speaks Russian" (Russia Today 15/7/2018) This is very sensitive in Europe. The Europeans view Russia's actions in Ukraine as meddling with the whole European security, that cannot be tolerated, and Trump's statement is considered by the EU as very dangerous for Europe, it means that Russia can destroy the European border and map from the east!

B- US President Trump's threat to Europe to return Russia to the G7: "US President Donald Trump on Friday, 8/6/2018, called on his G7 counterparts to consider Russia's return to the group. Trump said before heading to Canada to take part in the G7 summit in La Malbaie in the province of Quebec: "They threw Russia out... They should let Russia come back in, because we should have Russia at the negotiating table". Russia was expelled from the G8 after its annexation of the Crimea and the group included seven countries only." (Al Arabiya.net, 8/6/2018)

C- Al-Jazeera has reported on 15/7/2018, i.e. after the end of the NATO summit (European leaders are concerned about the rapprochement between Russia and America). What indicates the great European concern about the American rapprochement with Russia is what the German Foreign Minister said: "Heiko Maas, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs warned the President of the United States Donald Trump of any unilateral deals at the expense of his European allies during his meeting with the Russian President Vladimir Putin. Mass said to the newspaper "Bild am Sonntag": "Unilateral deals at the expense of the allies will harm the United States, too. The one who hits his partners risks to lose eventually" (Russia Today, 15/7/2018). The US-Russian rapprochement could damage the EU, as European sanctions imposed on Russia, which are renewed every six months because of Crimea and Ukraine, will be made ineffective and Russia will not care about the European countries then.

D- US President Trump, who lacks political wisdom, keeps attacking the European Union publicly, especially Germany, on the issue of the purchase of Russian gas, as we mentioned in the answer to the question dated 17/07/2018... Sometimes he describes it as a "rival" i.e. an "enemy" and other times he incites against it like in his advice to the British Prime Minister during their summit

meeting in London: "In an interview with the BBC, May said in response to a question on Trump's advice she said: "He told me that I should sue the EU. Not go into negotiation" (BBC 15/7/2018). Britain, despite its declared intentions to leave the European Union, but it shares the same view of the European countries on Russia, and it is not unlikely that the provocation of Russia by Britain is to disrupt the summit meeting between Russia and America, "Mil Radar website, dealing with Air traffic observation, reported that a British Air Force reconnaissance aircraft carried out surveillance flights near the coast of the Russian Crimea." (Russia Today, 15/7/2018)

Thus, with the pressure of America on Europe and its threat to bring back Russia to the G7 and hint at the American recognition of Crimea as part of Russia, and the American indifference to Ukraine's support in front of Russia's followers' attack on its east (Donetsk and Luhansk province) and improving US relations with Russia through the summit, Although indirect but they are big threats to Europe for the need to comply with US demands and increase the defense expenditure in NATO... That is, America pressed the EU countries through its rapprochement with Russia, and this is one of the main American goals for holding the summit between Trump and Putin

3- Regarding the Chinese side, it is as follow:

A- The US-Russian summit also took place on the backdrop of a US-led trade war against Beijing. As soon as America exhausted the Chinese services by softening North Korea's position and putting it on the path of peaceful solutions and removing the specter of war from the Korean Peninsula. This was represented by the American-North Korean Summit in Singapore on 12/6/2018. The US President thanked China for its efforts in that. As soon as these events took place, the United States implemented the policies announced by Trump against China even before becoming president... The US imposed customs duties on Chinese imports worth 50 billion dollars a year, China responded by the imposition of customs duties in the same value on US imports. American then announced a new plan to impose customs duties on China's other imports worth 200 billion dollars, which China cannot in the same way, because the total imports from America is 130 billion dollars, while its exports to America are 500 billion dollars, which leads China to think of other ways to respond to the trade war with USA

B- One of these ways chosen by China was the rapprochement with Russia. The Shanghai Organization held its last meeting in China on 10/6/2018 in conjunction with the meeting of the seven industrialized countries-G7 (which Russia was expelled from in 2014) held in Canada on 9/6/2018. These two meetings have shown a division in the world. The West meets in Canada and the East meets in China, and this did not meet the liking of America after it established its global hegemony after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. America saw without a doubt that the two active countries in the Shanghai Organization, China, which the United States waged a trade war against, and Russia, which America imposed harsh and growing sanctions against. On the other hand, America saw that Russia and China could become more interdependent under the US policy against them, and considering them as rivals in international trade and politics, in light of this US policy towards China and Russia, America has seen that its policy is pushing the two countries closer in cooperation, including the military side. Russia and China feel that they are facing one enemy, i.e. the United States, and that their cooperation strengthens their power. The message of the Chinese defense minister was very expressive of this feeling. "Russian Defense Minister Sergei Schweigo received his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe, who arrived in Moscow at the head a military delegation to participate in the Moscow International Security Conference. Wei Fenghe said during the meeting with Schweigo that he is visiting "to support the Russian side in the organization of the Moscow International Security Conference. The Chinese delegation arrived to show the Americans the strong ties between the Chinese and Russian armed forces, especially in the current situation." The Chinese Minister confirmed: "We came to your support. The Chinese side is ready to express, together with the Russian side, our common concern and common position on important international issues."" (Russia Today 3/4/2018)"

C- Therefore America saw that opening the door of hope for Russia's US rapprochement with them will lead to a distance between Russia and China, and finally dismantle their fragile alliance before the completion of its pillars, especially in the military. This is because America is aware of what Russia has in terms of military potential, and putting these energies or a part of it alongside China will strengthen it and allow it to reject the US policy, i.e. not to comply with the demands of Washington. Washington saw this as an easy thing to do. Russia is moving to China as a new strategy because of its poor relations with the West. If America shows a rapprochement with Russia, the pressure on Russia will be ease and it not turn towards China.

Because of all of this, Washington saw that it should open for Russia a door of hope to restore its relations with America to its previous position through the summit between the two presidents, that is, to stop the Russian move to China. Although it is too early to judge the achievement of these American goals from the summit with Russia, and it depends on the later steps of rapprochement between Washington and Moscow, but America can easily dismantle the fragile and mysterious "alliance", until now, between Russia and China. America is taking several steps on this side, sometimes on the Russian side as with the summit, and sometimes on the Chinese side. Since China's trade interests with America have the highest priority in Beijing than any relation China has with Russia.

4- To increase the impact of Trump's hot messages to the EU and China, Trump made the summit an open meeting to move it whenever it is necessary. I.e. it is a start to the next steps! Therefore he said after his closed meeting with Putin in Helsinki that the summit was "a new beginning" according to Russia Today, the Russian channel on 16/7/2018. At the press conference broadcasted live by Russia Today, he announced the agreement between the two countries to start negotiations on extending the nuclear disarmament agreement between them in 2010, which ends in 2021, and the American President Trump announced that relations with Russia was in a worst situation between them four hours ago, but now it has changed... And this is all general talk that corresponds exactly with what was announced by John Bolton. John Bolton, National Security Advisor to the White House said to the program "This Week" on ABC network "We have asked, and the Russians have agreed, that it will be basically unstructured. We are not looking for concrete deliverables," US Ambassador to Russia John Huntsman told NBC: "It's not a summit... it's a meeting... So this is an attempt to see if we can defuse and take some of the drama, and quite frankly some of the danger, out of the relationship right now. (Reuters, 16/7/2018)

5- This confirms that America has not yet planned to improve its relations with Russia and is still pursuing a policy of pressure on it. But for reasons related to the international situation and the US trade war with the European Union and China, it wanted to scare Europe with its rapprochement with Russia. And it decided to open a room of hope for Russia of ending its international isolation and of improving its relations with America, all in order to keep it away from the rapprochement with China on the one hand, and on the other hand, Russia may respond to US demands in other international issues, as it did in supporting the US policy in Syria, by keeping the American agent regime in Syria in power! Therefore, the summit was not to resolve specific international issues but rather it sent a hot message directed at China and towards the European Union. Otherwise, the talks were general and discussed everything without specificities, as confirmed by the two sides' statements. "Trump said that his talks with Putin will deal with " everything, starting with trade, going into military issues, missiles, and "ending" with China, we will talk a bit about China and our common friend, President Xi" while "Russian President Vladimir Putin told US President Donald Trump at the start of their summit in Helsinki that it was time to talk about relations between Moscow and Washington. He added that they too must discuss complex international multilateral issues." (Reuters 16/7/2018). Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed that the Helsinki summit will address "all the complex issues where our positions are different so that we can work to bring our views closer to solving these problems," and he ruled out reaching agreements. (Al Jazeera.net, 16/7/2018)

This generality shows that the intention of the Summit not to resolve specific international issues, and this is evident from the summit outcomes that some media outlets have reported. For example, the two sides agree on the security of the Jewish entity. Trump said "providing security for "Israel" is something Putin and I would like to see very, very much." (Reuters, 16/7/2018) and that the two parties are demanding the Syrian side to return to the status of the forces agreed in 1974 after the end of the fighting in southern Syria... All this is not new, America and Russia have been saying this publically for a long time, this is not something for which heads of America and Russia meet for. This is similar to the nuclear disarmament between their countries. "President Donald Trump said that the problem of nuclear disarmament is the fundamental problem that must be resolved between the Russian and American sides. Trump said in an interview with Fox News that "90% of the nuclear weapons in the world belong to Russia and the United States, pointing out that his predecessor, President Barack Obama, considered that global warming and rising temperatures is the most important problem, which must be focused on." (Russia Today, 17/7/2018)... and every visionary knows that America and Russia do not meet to disarm their nuclear weapons by choice, whatever they say, therefore, their meeting is not for this purpose...

6- As for the impact of the summit on the Syrian arena, it can be said that there is nothing new at this summit regarding the US and Russian policies in Syria. The two countries are fully in agreement with the elimination of the Syrian revolution, they are both waiting to achieve this as well as in full agreement on it, ever since the meeting between Obama and Putin on 29/9/2015, Russia has implemented the US policy in Syria and in coordination with it, while Russia is engaged in direct military actions such as the shelling of Daraa and its surroundings, America is supporting it, as in the letter sent to the Syrian opposition in the south, that "America will not provide them with any support during the attack on Daraa." There is nothing new about the Russian efforts to eliminate the Syrian revolution militarily and the American facilitation for that.

As for the political settlement in Syria, America is postponing it until the regime in Damascus and Russia completes the process of eliminating the armed opposition. Then, America will lead the comprehensive political process in Syria according to its interests, with or without a planned Russian role. And that political process was not discussed in the summit which indicates that America postpones it or it does not want a Russian role, or both.. It is not unlikely that Russia recognizes that the objectives of US policy in Syria does not allow Russia to participate in it, but Russia hopes that the United States does not restrict it in Ukraine, especially the Crimea... Trump pleased Russia with his remarks about the Crimea, as mentioned above, when he announced in the G7 summit. Last June, the media reported that Trump announced during the G7 summit that the Crimea belongs to Russia everyone there speaks Russian (Russia Today, 15/7/2018). This is very dangerous for Europe, which believes that Russia is destroying the borders and the European map from the east. Perhaps Russia will fall to its destruction by Trump's statements, and indeed it fell, and is disgraced in front of the Muslims because of the crimes it perpetrated against them for the interest of America! And this will remain in the memory of the Muslims against America and Russia and their supporters and followers, because the times will change, and crimes will not save those who commit them.

﴿سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ﴾

"There will afflict those who committed crimes debasement before Allah and severe punishment for what they used to conspire" [Al-An'am: 124]

8 Dhul Qi'dah 1439 AH

21/7/2018 CE