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## The Trump-Putin, Peace, Trade and Friendship Meeting



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It was predictable that news of the planned July 16 meeting between Presidents Trump and Putin would be greeted with displeasure in many sectors of the western world, and especially by the military-industrial complex. Trade is most important to its oligarchs — but peace and friendship come way down their page of priorities, because it is enmity and distrust that lead to lucrative sales of weapons.

The New York Times [noted that the news](#) was “stirring unease among foreign policy experts, including some in his own administration,” and the Washington Post [reported](#) a

“senior European diplomat” as musing “about whether it was worse for the two to meet before the NATO summit — when many alliance leaders fear the US president might make big concessions to Putin without input from them — or after, when they would be unable to mop up a mess.” The Opinion pages were full of dire predictions, as were those in the UK whose Daily Mail [stated](#) that “Fears are mounting that Donald Trump wants a ‘peace deal’ with Vladimir Putin that could fatally undermine NATO. Ministers are becoming increasingly alarmed that the US president could offer the Russian president deep concessions such as withdrawing forces from Europe.”

The Times of London [recorded](#) a UK government minister as saying “What we’re nervous of is some kind of Putin-Trump ‘peace deal’ suddenly being announced. We could see Trump and Putin saying, Why do we have all this military hardware in Europe? and agreeing to jointly remove that. It’s hard to be against peace, but would it be real peace?” Yes, it would be real peace, because Russia wants amicable relations and trade. Trade with the US and the EU and China and every other country that wants it — including, most importantly, the Baltic States that have been encouraged by the Pentagon-Brussels High Command to imagine that Russia is poised to invade them.

The US defense secretary, General James Mattis, [told](#) Estonia’s minister of defense that “Russia is trying to change international borders by force” and at meetings in May with Lithuania’s president and Baltic defense ministers “[reassured US allies](#) in the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia of American solidarity with them and of US determination to defend Baltic and other NATO territory against any aggression.”

Of all the absurd concoctions swinging round the Western propaganda world at the moment, the notion that Russia wants to invade Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania is probably the most laughable. Russia fully realizes that such action would inevitably result in wider conflict; and that there could be escalation to a shattering nuclear war. But even if it didn’t result in global catastrophe, the invasion of any one of these countries by Russia would be crippling costly in every way and simply doesn’t make sense.

In the context of the impending US-Russia talks, not a single Western media outlet mentioned that, as detailed in the [2018 World Report](#) of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “In 2017 the USA spent more on its military [\$610 billion] than the next seven highest-spending countries combined. . . . at \$66.3 billion, Russia’s military spending in 2017 was 20 per cent lower than in 2016.”

It could not be expected that Western media would give prominence to SIPRI’s [indisputable statement](#) that in 2016 “NATO’s collective military expenditure rose

to \$881 billion” while “European NATO members spent \$254 billion in 2016 — over 3 times more than Russia.”

Russia is reducing expenditure on defense while the US-NATO military alliance, as [noted by Radio Free Europe](#), agreed on June 7 to “reinforce NATO’s presence in a potential European crisis with the deployment of 30 troop battalions, 30 squadrons of aircraft, and 30 warships within 30 days — the so-called ‘Four 30s’ plan.” This, said the Secretary General of the US-NATO military alliance, Jens Stoltenberg, presumably with a straight face, is not “about setting up or deploying new forces — it is about boosting the readiness of existing forces across each and every ally.”

Then the BBC [reported](#) that Stoltenberg had put the best face he could on the unwelcome news of reduced tension and possible friendship. He said that “dialogue is a sign of strength . . . We don’t want a new Cold War, we don’t want to isolate Russia, we want to strive for a better relationship with Russia.” This is the man who [declared](#) in March 2018 that the US-NATO military grouping is increasing its numbers of confrontational deployments. He is pleased that at the end of 2017 there were more than 23,000 troops involved in NATO operations, an increase of over 5,000 since 2014. This is a peculiar way of striving for a “better relationship” with Russia, whose borders and shores are constantly menaced by NATO’s attack and electronic warfare aircraft, missile-equipped ships and tank-heavy troop maneuvers.

In June, immediately before the start of the World Cup football tournament in Russia 19 countries of the US-NATO alliance ([plus Israel](#)) joined in a [two-week military exercise](#) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

18,000 troops took part in Exercise Saber Strike, which, [according to the Pentagon’s HQ in Europe](#), was “not a provocation of Russia.” At the very time that citizens of countless countries were preparing to travel to Russia to enjoy a major sporting jamboree, the Pentagon-Brussels pressure group did its best to confront the country whose defense budget is one third of Europe’s and a tenth of America’s and whose [President declared](#) that his overwhelming priority is reduction of poverty and “the well-being of the people and the prosperity of Russian families.”

It is deeply ironical that while the US-NATO military fandangos were in full swing in the Baltic States, the football World Cup competition — involving teams from 10 of the 19 nations whose troops were rolling along Russia’s borders — was [going so well](#). And at the same time it was [reported that](#) “Russia on Wednesday [6 June] successfully launched its Soyuz MS-09 spacecraft carrying three crew members to the International Space

Station” The spacecraft carried three astronauts : Serena Aunon-Chancellor of the US, Germany’s Alexander Gerst and Russia’s Sergei Prokopyev,

The spacecraft zoomed away in international harmony two days before US Senator Ben Sasse grouched that “Putin is not our friend and he is not the president’s buddy. He is a thug using Soviet-style aggression to wage a shadow war against America, and our leaders should act like it.” With that sort of attitude, widespread in the Congress, it’s going to be difficult to realize Trump’s desire to “get along with Russia” which he observes would be “good for the world, it’s good for us, it’s good for everybody.”

Trump is the most erratic president the US has ever known. He ricochets from malevolent tweeting to spiteful speeches, and is now distrusted by almost every foreign leader of stature. It is difficult to disagree with the opinion of the commentator Robert Reich that he is a “selfish, thin-skinned, petulant, lying, narcissistic, boastful megalomaniac,” *but* — and it is a very big ‘but’ — at the moment he presents the best and perhaps only chance for rapprochement and amity with Russia. The fact that Washington’s warmongers so violently oppose his forthcoming talks with President Putin is evidence enough that he is on the right track. Let’s hope that he can be kept on the rails that lead to peace, trade and friendship.