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Moscow Upbeat About Putin-Trump Meeting at G20

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Carlos Barria / Reuters

In stark contrast to the cool reaction from American media, most Russian politicians and experts gushed about Friday's meeting between presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump at the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany.

Franz Klintsevich, deputy chairman of the Federation Council's Committee for Defense and Security, called the Putin-Trump meeting a "serious step forward,'' and said that progress had been made on Syria, Ukraine and cyber security. The Federation Council is the upper house of Russia's legislature.

"The meeting achieved its main objective — it opened the totally closed door of Russian-American relations, and removed all questions about the ability of the two leaders to get along,'' Klintsevich told the state-run TASS news agency.

Konstantin Kosachev, head of the Federation Council's International Affairs Committee, said the meeting was a "breakthrough," both practically and psychologically.

“I must admit that the results of the meeting of the Russian and U.S. presidents exceeded my expectations, and not only mine,’’ said Kosachev.

“[Foreign Minister Sergei] Lavrov’s opinion is very significant — that both presidents are focused not on conflict, but on achieving mutually beneficial cooperation.’”

Referring to the meeting, Lavrov said it had been "business-like," adding agreements had been reached on Syria, Ukraine and cyber security. He also told journalists Putin had told Trump that allegations of Russian meddling in U.S. elections were untrue. "He [Trump] says that he accepts these assertions. That's it," Lavrov said.

Leonid Slutsky, head of the State Duma’s International Affairs Committee, said that "the meeting could begin the process of ending the degradation in Russian-American relations. That the meeting lasted longer than planned — more than two hours — is a positive sign.’’

Experts who lean closer to Russia’s opposition were less sanguine, however. Alexei Kudrin, a former Finance Minister, dryly commented on Twitter that "Russian-American relations need a new start. The Putin-Trump meeting was useful.’’

Andrei Bystritsky, chairman of the board of the Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Club, said that the most significant progress was made on the issue of Syria, “which allows us to hope for the transformation of the armed Syrian conflict into a political process.’’

“Russia and the U.S. can achieve much in the region,’’ Bystritsky told TASS.

“The Syrian crisis in itself is a critical issue that allows us to hope that the great powers will find a way to work together to work effectively to resolve the conflict.’’

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