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Foreign Policy Insight

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Meeting in Minsk



President Poroshenko achieved maximum from a priori an ineffective format for peace negotiations in Donbas. There was no breakthrough. No documents, pushed by Belorussian President Lukashenko, were signed. Moreover, Volodymyr Putin by all means avoided the subject of war, waged by Moscow against Ukraine. However, Putin was forced to declare that he stands for ending the bloodshed and for the first time, in the presence of three European witnesses, stressed that Russia “will do everything for it.”

Among the reached agreements, we can distinguish the following:

- Firstly, the re-instatement of the trilateral Ukraine — Russia — EU negotiations on energy issues.
- Secondly, the activation of the three-party expert group Ukraine –Russia — EU regarding the economic impact of the DCFTA between Ukraine and the EU.
- Thirdly, the beginning of consultations by the border authorities and the General Staff of Ukraine and Russia on the re-establishment of control over the common border and the cessation of hostilities in eastern Ukraine. Meanwhile,

an overall thesis was agreed upon about the necessity of releasing all prisoners and hostages, although the mechanism to achieve this goal has not yet been identified.

Before and during the meeting several dates and places were aired as possible arenas for further negotiations between President Poroshenko and Putin. If the proposal to meet in Slovakia was instantaneously dismissed by the Russian side (probably due to the fact that the media would ambiguously interpret the reason as the 70 anniversary of the beginning of the anti-fascist uprising), the other two — Turkey and Minsk — were intensely debated before the talks were over.

However, due to the fact that the negotiations in the capital of Belarus until recently were in jeopardy, especially the bilateral meeting between the presidents of Ukraine and Russia, and their progress has shown that Vladimir Putin is personally unwilling to make concessions, the high-level peace talks in the immediate future are not likely.

Probably after the Minsk talks Moscow and the leading capitals of the European Union will reas-

sess their own forces and make adjustments to the scenario of the events that are likely to develop. Given a large gulf demonstrated in recent months between the Kremlin's official statements and practical actions on the ground, Ukraine should carefully prepare for the EU summit set to take place on August 30th of this year to which President Poroshenko was invited. It is crucial for Ukraine to provide credible evidence of the participation of the Russian army in military operations in eastern Ukraine as well as to hold preliminary consultations through diplomatic channels in order to create a favorable position for Ukraine regarding the integrated conflict resolution plan for eastern Ukraine, the continued non-recognition of Russia's annexation of the Crimea and the provision of financial assistance for the restoration of Donbas.

The coming days will show whether there have

been any changes in the behavior of Vladimir Putin. However, to channel the military confrontation with Russia into a phase of peaceful settlement, Ukraine should focus its efforts in two directions. First, exploring the options of increasing the speed of the Anti Terrorist Operation (ATO) in eastern Ukraine. Second, Kyiv must intensify consultations through diplomatic channels to move conflict resolution into an effective format of Geneva+. Namely, the EU, Ukraine, USA, the UN, the OSCE and Russia. The participation of the United States in peace talks negotiations that has determining influence on Kremlin, as well as a comprehensive settlement agenda that includes a cease-fire in eastern Ukraine and further post-conflict settlement in the Donbas, which should be carried out by the UN and the OSCE, can allow all the stakeholders to save face and achieve peace in the region.

Merkel's visit to Ukraine



In the month preceding the visit of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Kyiv on August 23, Ukrainian officials, especially Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, made loud statements that the visit would be “interesting” and rather “unusual”. However, the results of her visit led to a heated public debate. By and large, her visit is seen in the negative

light due to several controversial statements made by Angela Merkel.

In reality, there are positives as well as negatives to her recent visit. Crucial for Ukraine is the fact that the German Chancellor has publicly supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine and assured that the annexation of the Crimea will

never be recognized. Also, noteworthy was the announcement of the allocation of 500 million euros for the reconstruction of the Donbas after a peaceful settlement is reached. However, the absence of any signed documents, even bilateral political statement, which is a common practice during the visits of this kind, leads to two conclusions. First, the visit itself was not properly prepared and the likely reason for this is the absence of the Ukrainian Ambassador in Germany for over two months now. Second, the restraint of Angela Merkel in her statements is indicative of German desire to not

annoy Vladimir Putin and preserve a room for further contact with him.

The results of the visit indicate that President Poroshenko and the Ukrainian diplomatic corps should abandon their excessive concentration on having Germany help in settling the situation in eastern Ukraine. Instead, they should immediately intensify the dialogue with leaders of other EU member states, especially Poland, the UK, the Baltic States and Northern Europe. Only joint efforts of many European leaders can prevent a large-scale war in Europe and help to bring peace to Ukraine.

The aim of the publication is to provide analysis of Ukraine's foreign policy in the context of global processes in the region and the world, as well as an overview of major world events that may have an impact on the further development of Ukraine and the region. Special attention is paid to the European integration of Ukraine, in particular implementation of Ukraine–EU Association Agreement.

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