

US Absent from Minsk Putin-Poroshenko Summit. Washington is the “Real Policymaker” Behind Kiev

By [Srdja Trifkovic](#)

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It is funny that at the talks between the leaders of the Eurasian Customs Union and Ukraine the European troika will be in attendance, whereas the real policy for Kiev is being drawn up in Washington, foreign affairs analyst Srdja Trifkovic told RT.

“So far Washington has been playing a game of geopolitical encirclement of Russia which cannot be in the European interest, and which in the long-term can only result in the kind of civilizational catastrophe that we have seen exactly a hundred years ago in 1914”, Trifkovic added.

RT: *Today’s is the first major meeting between the new Ukrainian president and Vladimir Putin. What’s the significance?*

Srdja Trifkovic: I greatly fear there is less than meets the eye, because neither Poroshenko has a great deal of leeway in the proceedings, he has opted for a military solution in the east and he cannot backtrack on that one without losing credibility with his base particularly in the west of the country, nor does Vladimir Putin have any motivation to offer anything now that the negotiations are stalled and federalization and the protection of Russian language rights are a non-issue. So I think this will be an exercise in futility, it will be used for propaganda purposes by both sides but the elephant missing from the room is John Kerry and Victoria Nuland, because it is rather funny that there will be the European troika in attendance from Brussels whereas the real policy and agenda for Kiev is being drawn up in Washington DC.

RT: *Angela Merkel said in a recent interview that she doesn’t expect these talks to bring about a breakthrough. Do you think she’s right?*

ST: The Germans have effectively abdicated their role in determining European policy by joining the sanctions two weeks ago. The Germans could have had an opportunity to display statesmanship and display a genuine role in meeting the two poles of policy in Washington DC and Moscow, and by failing to do that and effectively joining the American bandwagon they have become irrelevant. Angela Merkel’s weight in Moscow used to be much greater a month ago than it is now.



Ukraine's President-elect Petro Poroshenko (R) walks past Russian President Vladimir Putin during the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the D-Day in Ouistreham, western France, Friday, June 6, 2014. (Reuters / Christophe Ena)

RT: *Senior EU representatives will be present on Kiev's side at the talks. What do they want to come out of those talks? Are they perhaps worried about gas?*

ST: If they were truly worried about gas transit and they certainly have a reason to be worried, in the past form we have seen Ukraine up to no good in 2006 and again in 2009, they would at least exert some pressure on Poroshenko to reach a political solution of the conflict in east. That solution has been on offer all the time, it simply means decentralization and language rights, it is nothing particularly remarkable, and they are certainly not stabbing the back of the Ukrainian state. But so far unfortunately, we have seen nothing but following up the American lead in Europe on a very hard-line, very stiff and uncompromising line that Kiev has followed for the past five months. If we see some readiness for compromise, I am certain that Vladimir Putin and his national security team will be all too happy to take it, but at the moment there is none of it on the horizon.

RT: *Do you think the united efforts of Ukraine and the EU will be enough to make President Putin submit to their demands?*

ST: The Russian side has said repeatedly that this is a political problem that requires a political solution. If there is a degree of decentralization that would take into account the particular interests of Donetsk and Lugansk and also places like Odessa, Nikolaevsk and even Kharkov, I am sure that the Russian leadership would be eager to embrace it. It is not in the interest of Moscow to prolong this conflict. They want a settlement that will take into account the interests of the inhabitants of Eastern Ukraine, they do not want secession, but at the same time the hard line from Kiev, supported unfortunately by some of the worst elements in the country such as the Right Sector and the Svoboda party, does not bode well for a political solution. If there is a readiness in the West to prompt Kiev in the direction of a political solution, we indeed could have it today in Minsk.

RT: *Chancellor Merkel also believes Ukraine should strike a balance between its European leanings and good relations with Russia. Can Poroshenko do that?*

ST: In geopolitical terms it is absolutely essential that the formula be found that would guarantee Ukraine's military neutrality and balance its economic needs between the East and the West. But at the same time, unfortunately, Washington has been pressing a zero-sum game and I am pretty certain that the Europeans would really like to resolve this one because it is a minus-sum game for all concerned, certainly for both the Germans and the Russians. The problem is that Washington has been up to no good, Washington has been playing the game of geopolitical encirclement of Russia which cannot be in the European interest and which in a long term can only result in the kind of civilizational catastrophe that we have seen exactly a hundred years ago in 1914.

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