

Minsk II's future looks bleak, but what's the alternative?

Opinion

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There is little probability of Minsk II's implementation in the near term, writes Steven Pifer, and no viable alternative is on the table. Moscow has the power and influence to make implementation happen, but there is no real evidence that the Russian leadership wants Minsk II implemented. Where does that leave things?

Commentary by Steven Pifer*, former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine The Minsk II agreement marked its second anniversary in February. Brokered by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande, it sought to bring peace to the Donbas region, where Russian and separatist forces have been in conflict with Ukrainian troops since April 2014. Minsk II's first three elements dealt with security: ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact, and access for monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Other elements provided for a constitutional amendment on decentralization of authority, exchange of prisoners, an election law and special status for the Russian/separatist-occupied part of the Donbas, and restoration of Ukrainian control of the Ukraine-Russia border. Unfortunately, little of this arrangement has been implemented. Minsk II arguably helped mitigate the fighting, but the ceasefire regularly breaks down. Both sides share responsibility, though observers attach more blame to the Russians and separatists. No one considers the agreement a success, as the death toll has climbed to nearly 10,000 lives. The problem appears to be that the Kremlin and separatist forces prefer a simmering conflict to settlement. Leaders of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk "People's Republics" repeatedly state they will not accept restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty, which is a key goal of Minsk II. For complete text, link below:

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-of-ideas/2017/03/13/what-comes-next-for-minsk-ii/>

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