

# Role of U.N. Peacekeepers In Donbas Conflict Resolution

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## ABSTRACT

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This paper argues that third-party peacekeeping can play a vital role in mitigating and resolving the Ukraine-Russian conflict in the Donbas region. Understanding the current situation in the region as well as the intricacies and implications of a U.N. peacekeeping mission is important in assessing a solution to the ongoing conflict. This paper will provide an overview of the Minsk Agreements, signed as a result of prior attempts to halt the conflict, and will discuss which actors and stakeholders could play a prominent role in implementing a peacekeeping mission. It will then go over the details of such a peacekeeping force, including necessary U.N. mandate requirements, troop consistency, and the challenges of deployment on the ground; and highlight the objectives for reducing hostilities. The paper will conclude by addressing which goals are thought to be attainable within the short, medium, and long-term.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Ukrainian Donbas region has been in conflict since the Euromaidan protests and the ousting of President Yanukovich in 2014. Russia viewed the protests and subsequent ousting as a coup against a democratically elected leader. On the pretext of protecting Russian minorities in Ukraine, Russia then annexed Crimea and provided financial and military assistance to pro-Russian separatist regions in the Donbas: the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Russia, France, and Germany attempted to mitigate the conflict through the two Minsk Agreements, signed in 2014

and 2015 respectively. However, these efforts ultimately failed to uphold a ceasefire and critical portions of the Minsk II Agreement remain neglected. A resolution is critically needed as the Donbas conflict continues to exacerbate the tenuous relationship between Russia and the transatlantic alliance. Russia's aggressive actions may bolster its position as an influential state, but these actions increase the risk of conflict with the United States and the European Union. While great power politics dominate the relationship between Russia and the West, Ukrainian citizens, as well as its national sovereignty and institutional legitimacy, continue to suffer from this ongoing conflict.

This paper argues that third-party peacekeeping can serve as a solution to ending the conflict between Ukraine, Russia, and the pro-Russian republics in the Donbas region. In order to illustrate this argument, it is first necessary to highlight the viability of a U.N. peacekeeping mission and address the Minsk Agreements that have attempted to halt the conflict.

## **THE MINSK AGREEMENTS**

The Minsk I and II currently serve as the governing peace documents for the Donbas conflict. Minsk I was negotiated between the OSCE's Trilateral Contact Group, which consisted of representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE. The agreement established twelve protocols designed to implement a peace agreement to end the conflict, including a ceasefire.<sup>1</sup> However, Ukraine and the pro-Russian republics frequently violated the terms of ceasefire and the conflict continued to escalate through 2014. As a result of the continuous heavy fighting, the negotiations for Minsk II began. In February 2015 – following a round of negotiations that included the presidents of France, Germany, and Russia – Ukraine and the separatist republics accepted a new ceasefire agreement and established thirteen implementation protocols.<sup>2</sup>

Minsk II's thirteen protocols sought to build a roadmap for resolving the conflict. These included agreement between the conflicting parties on “an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the line of contact, elections held based on the Law of Ukraine, the withdrawal of foreign armed formations, and the reestablishment of Ukrainian control of the Ukraine-Russia border.”<sup>3</sup> The agreement stipulates that the OSCE will remain the governing body in charge of enforcement and monitoring to ensure the protocols are followed.<sup>4</sup>

While Minsk II is an imperfect document, it does provide a roadmap for ending the Donbas conflict. Ceasefire violations continue and the conflicting parties of Russia, Ukraine, DPR, and LPR have failed to implement the specific protocols needed to achieve an effective resolution. Russia accuses Ukraine of

not pursuing the political reforms outlined in Minsk II, while Ukraine accuses Russia of failing to remove its troops or surrender control of Ukraine-Russia border.<sup>5</sup> Russia continues to provide financial and military aid to the separatist republics, and neither the Ukrainian government nor the republics have moved their heavy weaponry from the ceasefire line. Moreover, Ukraine has failed to implement amnesty for combatants and does not have the “necessary leverage” to compel Russian cooperation.<sup>6</sup> These continued hostilities have prevented establishment of mutual trust between all parties.

Additionally, the OSCE is not an effective neutral actor and cannot enforce the agreement. OSCE monitors do not have full access to the separatist regions and the ongoing clashes preclude comprehensive oversight of the participants.<sup>7</sup> The OSCE has the necessary toolkit to implement the Minsk protocols, but has failed to compel the conflicting parties towards those objectives. Without adequate protection or capabilities to address the political differences, the OSCE cannot implement the peace agreement or maintain the ceasefire.<sup>8</sup>

Despite its flaws, Minsk II remains critical to addressing the conflict. The thirteen principles established should not be eliminated by an intervening third-party, but instead be incorporated into the broader mandates of peacebuilding in the region. A better agreement is unlikely to occur, as Russia will not remove troops until a political compromise is reached and Ukraine will not push a political compromise until military forces are removed.<sup>9</sup> Due to the rigidity of the conflict parties, an intervening third-party force is required to mitigate conflict and uphold the terms of the peace agreement.

## **CRITICAL ACTORS**

A peacekeeping mission offers the best solution in this situation, but the approval for such a mission requires the support of some specific actors. First, Ukraine must request a peacekeeping deployment, and then, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) members, especially Russia and the United States, must approve the mission. Moreover, DPR and LPR’s consent is critical for any deployment.

### *UKRAINE*

Following 2015 Ukrainian losses near the ceasefire line, President Poroshenko called for the deployment of international peacekeeping forces. Ukraine proposed a robust mission to guarantee that peacekeeping forces would aid in the removal of foreign troops and heavy weaponry as well as help the Ukrainian government regain control over the Ukraine-Russian border.<sup>10</sup> Ukraine does not support a proposal that does not guarantee government control over the separatist regions. Russia opposed Poroshenko’s proposal and

the initiative stalled in the UNSC.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, new Russian statements on peacekeeping highlight the potential for a future mission that would be mutually acceptable.

To many in Ukraine, Minsk II was accepted under duress after pro-Russia groups violated Minsk I to secure critical contested territory.<sup>12</sup> Members of Ukraine's government have consequently hesitated to initiate the reforms required by Minsk II. The Ukrainian resistance to Minsk II, complicates the implementation of the agreement and of any future peacekeeping mission, and necessitates considerable consensus-building efforts in Ukraine.<sup>13</sup>

## *RUSSIA*

Russia has recently supported the possibility of a peacekeeping force in the region. In September 2017, President Putin proposed a limited lightly-armed peacekeeping force that would control the Minsk II ceasefire line and aid the OSCE in monitoring efforts.<sup>14</sup> However, Ukraine and Western governments rejected this proposal on the grounds that it would be inadequate to create the conditions needed to support the Minsk process, and would legitimize the separatist border as a permanent split in Ukraine.<sup>15</sup> President Poroshenko denounced the Russian plan and continued to advocate for the 2015 Ukrainian peacekeeping proposal, stating, "The U.N. peacekeeping operation should restore justice rather than freeze the conflict and cement the [Russian] occupation."<sup>16</sup> Ukrainian and Russian interests therefore continue to remain divided.

Although Russia annexed Crimea with minimal resistance, the Donbas conflict is taking a greater toll on Russian international interests. Therefore, Russia can be incentivized towards international peacekeeping cooperation despite its past obstinacy. First, Russian peacemaking efforts would engender Western appreciation and assist in normalizing relations. Second, Russian funding of the separatist republics add up to about \$1 billion a year, a financial burden which is compounded by the economic sanctions imposed by the West.<sup>17</sup> Third, while seizing Crimea offered the strategic port of Sevastopol and valuable infrastructure connecting Russia to its military bases on the peninsula, the Donbas is comparatively less valuable, both geographically and economically.

Although the Donbas conflict offers few benefits for Russia, Russian support for a peacekeeping operation is conditional on being offered certain advantageous incentives. Russia will not support any peacekeeping mission that does not lift international sanctions. The Russian economy has contracted under the sanctions and credible promises of sanctions relief are vital to ensuring Russian cooperation with any peacekeeping negotiations. With its UNSC veto power, Russia will play a key role in negotiating the terms

of the peacekeeping mandate as well as the structure of the deployment.<sup>18</sup> Russia will not permit a stabilizing peace mandate and will resist a force structure that consists of NATO-country forces.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, any peacekeeping operation must be solely focused on the Donbas; inclusion of Crimea in any peacekeeping mandate would lead to a veto in the UNSC.

### *DPR AND LPR*

Although their consent is not required for a peacekeeping deployment, the DPR and LPR maintain significant regional control and their cooperation is valuable for ensuring the safety and success of a peacekeeping mission. Obtaining DPR and LPR consent remains a challenge, however. DPR and LPR consent to a peacekeeping force would include agreeing to abide by Ukrainian government control, which is unacceptable to some regional leaders. Former DPR leader Zakharchenko rejected any peacekeeping beyond protecting OSCE monitoring efforts.<sup>20</sup> So long as these groups see peacekeepers as a tool to enforce Ukrainian control in the region, they will remain unwilling to participate.

Despite their hesitation to cooperate with a peacekeeping mission, the DPR and LPR are dependent upon Russian support and will likely comply with Russian directions on the matter. While Russia is unlikely to limit support until a peacekeeping agreement is accepted, the threat of reduced support would compel the republics to comply with peacekeeper requests.<sup>21</sup>

### *UNITED STATES*

The United States' complicated relationship with Russia and its permanent seat on the UNSC give it a significant role in any peacekeeping discussions. The U.S. has expressed a willingness to discuss a possible U.N. peacekeeping mission and force structure, but would like Russia to make a good-faith commitment to the process first.<sup>22</sup> President Trump has demonstrated a willingness to participate in resolving global conflicts and display his administration's mastery of foreign policy, both in North Korea and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By deploying peacekeepers to mitigate the Donbas conflict, the Trump administration would enjoy a foreign policy success and a possible boost in domestic approval.

The United States has long advocated for peaceful resolution to the conflict; however, certain preconditions exist. One such precondition is that the peacekeeping mandate cannot be limited to traditional ceasefire line enforcement. In the context of the Donbas conflict, such a limited mandate would essentially concede the Donbas region to Russia without granting Ukraine control over the Ukraine-Russia border. Another precondition is that

any Russian demand for sanctions relief must only address Donbas-related sanctions. The United States seeks a credible withdrawal of all Russian forces from the Donbas and a denouncement of the insurgent groups. Without these conditions, U.S. support for a peacekeeping mission would be limited and a successful UNSC resolution would be unlikely.

### *THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL*

The UNSC is the principal guarantor of any peacekeeping mission. A peacekeeping mission could be authorized if nine of the fifteen council members approve it, but anything less than an unanimous approval would weaken the mission.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, any veto by a permanent member of the UNSC – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – would jeopardize any resolution.

The Security Council's membership is an important factor in the approval of peacekeeping forces. China, France, and the United Kingdom maintain significant influence in the area of peacekeeping operations. Due to their close relationship with the U.S., France and the United Kingdom would most likely follow the United States' lead; any U.S. sanctions relief for Russian participation in the peace process will require France and the United Kingdom's cooperation. China, however, has made contradictory statements regarding its support of peacekeeping operations and its support cannot be assured. In the last several years, China has committed 8,000 troops to the U.N. peacekeeping standby force, one-fifth of the 40,000 total troops committed by fifty nations.<sup>24</sup> China has also increased economic ties with Ukraine and proposed that it become a UNSC member. Nevertheless, China and Russia have also acted aggressively to hedge against U.S. hegemonic control, suggesting that if Russia remains resistant to peacekeeping, China will likely follow suit.

While the permanent members of the UNSC have the greatest control in enabling a peacekeeping operation, other member states also play critical roles. At least nine UNSC members will have to agree with the mandate and its associated scale and deployment in order for it to be authorized. These nations can be grouped into differently aligned factions: pro-Russian countries such as Bolivia and Kazakhstan are likely to side with Russian proposals while U.S.-aligned nations such as Sweden and the Netherlands are likely to agree to Western proposals. A peacekeeping proposal must steer through the political gamesmanship that U.N. negotiations entail.

### **A U.N. PEACEKEEPING MISSION TO UKRAINE**

A U.N. peacekeeping mission is the only way to mitigate Ukrainian-Russian differences and ensure peace in the Donbas region. If ceasefire violations

continue, the chances of any peaceful resolution will fade. Russia's support for the DPR and LPR continues to damage Ukraine's relationship with Russia, a vital economic partner. A peacekeeping mission with a targeted mandate, careful troop selection, acceptable leadership, and wide operational objectives will ensure that all parties adhere to the Minsk II terms.

The proposed peacekeeping mission, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in the Donbas (UNFID) will meet resistance in the UNSC and its success depends on the drafting of an acceptable mandate that addresses conditions on the ground. UNFID's goals should closely match Minsk II objectives. Additionally, it should use the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) as a template for success. UNTAES' principal tasks included re-establishing functioning public services, assisting and training police forces, ensuring the possibility of refugee and displaced people's return, and organizing elections in due time.<sup>25</sup> UNFID must be mandated under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter to ensure the stability and security of the region, assist in managing elections in accordance with Minsk II, and supervise public services and civilian reintegration.<sup>26</sup> Missions mandated under Chapter VII provide the force permission to maintain international security – specifically through peace enforcement – and demonstrate a greater commitment on the part of the U.N. to end the conflict.<sup>27</sup> Enforcement of these conditions must extend to the entirety of the Donbas region.

UNFID's mandate on troop commitments will be difficult to pass. A traditional peacekeeping mission is too limited to achieve UNFID's goals, while a stabilizing mission, in which force is utilized to neutralize spoilers, is too aggressive. Instead, a robust peace operation is necessary to resolve the conflict while remaining acceptable to all stakeholders.<sup>28</sup> Russia would be unwilling to support a mission that advocates aggressive actions against proxy groups, and the DPR and LPR would view a stabilizing mission as direct Western intervention. To pass UNFID, the United States and European Union members must agree to Russian sanctions relief. Ukraine will also need to commit to future economic cooperation with Russia and permit Russian culture and language study in the Donbas. These incentives do not guarantee that Russia will accept a robust peacekeeping resolution; however, coercion has failed to alter Russian conduct in the region and these inducements offer the greatest chance of creating a successful peacekeeping mission.

Force size, composition, and command are also essential elements in the creation of a permissible mandate. Although the Russian peacekeeping proposal requested that troop size remain minimal, it is estimated that, to meet the challenges of a robust peacekeeping mission, between 20,000 and 50,000 personnel are recommended. Most analysts agree that a member force of at least 20,000, along with a police force of 4,000, is required to fulfilment

the mandate of a robust peacekeeping mission.<sup>29</sup> A mission of this size would be comparable to U.N. peacekeeping missions in Darfur, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>30</sup> A majority of these troops would be used to secure the Ukraine-Russia border. A mission that illustrates the numbers needed for border patrol is the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights: 1,000 personnel were needed to patrol sixty kilometers of border.<sup>31</sup> A similar border “trip-wire” in the Donbas would therefore require between 5,000 to 6,000 personnel to patrol 400 kilometers.<sup>32</sup> The rest of the peacekeeping force would be dispersed throughout the Donbas. A peacekeeping force of roughly 20,000 personnel would cost approximately \$1 billion USD.<sup>33</sup>

UNFID’s leadership should be carefully selected to maintain impartiality in the peacekeeping mission. Russia and the United States will defeat any resolution that places command under aligned nations, such as Kazakhstan, Belarus, or NATO member states. The United States has advocated for Sweden, a current UNSC member with a neutral position on the conflict, as a suitable leader for the mission.<sup>34</sup> Alternatively, Scandinavian countries such as Finland could serve as effective leaders of a U.N. mission as these nations are not NATO members and are influential regional players.<sup>35</sup>

Although Europe is required to provide a contingent of the troops for the UNFID mission, additional forces must also be found elsewhere. Chinese participation would ensure involvement of a permanent UNSC member in the conflict, while countries like Kazakhstan and Belarus should contribute additional forces to ensure that Central Asian and Russian-aligned nations have a voice in the peacekeeping mission.<sup>36</sup> Countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, and Egypt already provide significant troop contributions to the United Nations, and these forces can be utilized in support of UNFID.<sup>37</sup> Other countries such as Poland, Portugal, and Romania have experience with U.N. policing operations<sup>38</sup> and further support could be drawn from Rwanda, Senegal and Jordan—the three largest contributors to U.N. police forces.<sup>39</sup> Overall, a large contingent of troops and police is required for the UNFID mission, and these forces must be drawn from pro-U.S., pro-Russian, and non-aligned nations to establish the international composition needed for the mission’s success.

Finally, troop deployment to and dispersal in the region are factors that must be considered. A gradual extension into the Donbas territory or an immediate insertion into the entire region are both viable options. With a robust mandate, full integration into the region is required. A phased approach carries risk to Ukraine, as Russia can slow peacekeeping efforts by continuing to finance separatist factions.<sup>40</sup> However, an immediate deployment and dispersal into the entire Donbas will elicit resentment in the



local population and likely increase the risk of violence. Although it grants leniency to Russia's agenda, a phased deployment is best. UNFID's first phase can secure the Minsk II ceasefire line, its second phase will extend the operation towards deployment in Luhansk and Donetsk, and its third phase will secure the border regions between Ukraine and Russia, with full deployment throughout the Donbas. Once security and a ceasefire are established, additional mandated objectives can be pursued.

## **UNFID OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES & MANAGING SPOILER BEHAVIOR**

### *OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*

A peaceful solution in the Donbas is contingent on completion of the U.N. peacekeeping mandates. UNFID's ability to maintain the ceasefire, pursue conflict de-escalation, provide for local elections and the establishment of viable political representation, mediate cultural conflicts, and implement Minsk II will be critical. Each aspect of the mandate must be addressed to move the conflict towards long-term peace.

UNFID's immediate objective will be to separate the combatant parties and uphold the ceasefire, as no further objectives or reconciliation efforts can occur until a ceasefire is achieved. UNFID would work with the OSCE's regional presence to promote de-escalation and monitoring. UNFID forces will be expected to carry out civilian protection tasks, including but not limited to: providing humanitarian assistance; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) techniques; supporting police presence; and coercive disarmament.<sup>41</sup> Peacekeepers can facilitate the removal of heavy weapons, the exchange of detained persons, and the withdrawal of armed forces. Peacebuilding efforts can occur alongside OSCE's operations once UNFID's presence is established.

UNFID and the OSCE must ensure that the Donbas pursues fair and credible elections. Minsk II promised local elections and a decentralization of government powers; however, the Donbas region declared independence because it believed the new central government was illegitimate and the Ukrainian government would not recognize the Donbas' Russian ties. Thus the long-term success of UNFID is contingent on tackling long-term apathy in the Donbas region towards Ukraine's political process, and ensuring that the region feels invested in the political process.

Efforts must also be made to improve the discourse regarding the Donbas' Russian cultural ties. Ukraine and the Donbas must reach a consensus on Russian cultural and language programs in the region. Additionally, Ukraine must be willing to allow Donbas minority populations to teach and use the

Russian language in governance and education. Donbas minorities will continue to view the central government as illegitimate and oppressive if it fails to recognize their historic cultural ties to Russia. A compromise that allows for both Russian and Ukrainian programs in the Donbas may offer a possible solution. Cultural and ethnic understanding will serve as a tool to prevent further violent clashes.

Critical to the UNFID's operational objectives is restoring public services and promoting social order. In addition to improving the cultural climate, UNFID can seek to bolster government operations weakened by the conflict. UNFID's police force can work towards educating and training local police personnel. Militia rule would not be permissible as the region is returned to Ukrainian control.

UNFID will also need to ensure justice is pursued, as a reduction in conflict will mean combatants return to society. Amnesty for combatants must be offered to separatist fighters, as established in Minsk II requirements. However, a blanket amnesty will be unacceptable to some UNSC members<sup>42</sup> and will permit potential future spoilers to return to the conflict. Instead, amnesty should be offered to any combatants who have not committed war crimes or crimes against humanity. Amnesty will encourage a return to normalcy by allowing the combatant parties to negotiate.

## *SPOILERS*

Spoilers can arise in every peace process. While Ukraine's cooperation is required to deploy a peacekeeping mission, as an inside party, it could act as a 'limited' or 'greedy' spoiler. Limited spoilers have critical red lines that must be managed in the peace agreement, while a greedy spoiler's behavior changes depending on the advantages the spoiler can garner.<sup>43</sup> If the Donbas republics are slow to reintegrate with Ukraine, for example, Ukraine may be unwilling to demobilize paramilitaries.<sup>44</sup> Alternatively, Ukrainian leaders may spoil the peacekeeping process if regional elections lead to government losses and the installation of pro-Russian politicians.

Ukraine's spoiler behavior can be addressed by offering positive measures to address grievances, decreasing violent conflict, and through socialization—a process in which new norms are established that create a framework for negotiation.<sup>45</sup> Western governments can encourage the Ukrainian government to comply with UNFID and Minsk II using trade agreements. Through socialization, UNFID and stakeholders can demonstrate to Ukraine that normative standards include commitment to democratic participation and socialize the government's behavior to comply with smooth transitions of political power.

In any discussion of Ukraine's future, the risk of Russia will spoil the peace

process is substantial. As outlined above, Russia can prevent the implementation of any peacekeeping mission if its demands and conditions are not met. Many in the Russian government are total spoilers who are unwilling to broker any compromise and who support aggressive action in Ukraine. However, President Putin is likely a greedy spoiler. Putin's objectives change based on a costs benefits analysis. Putin is willing to negotiate with the West when it benefits him, but he can also serve as a roadblock. As part of peace negotiations, Putin will demand Ukrainian inducements in the short- and long-term. These inducements with Russia would not guarantee safer relations given Russia's long history of interfering in Ukraine. Russians continue to abide by zero-sum strategies and can be resistant to compromise settlements.

The Donbas republics are a critical component of any peace agreement and are likely to show spoiler behavior. The DPR and LPR are likely to be limited spoilers. Both republics have specific conditions for the future direction of the Donbas; common ground must be found in order to promote peace. Russia serves as the greatest ally in ensuring the cooperation of the DPR and LPR because the republics rely on Russian support. Russian direction can force the republics' compliance with any peace agreement or peacekeeping mission.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, UNFID and the UNSC must consider possible regional total spoilers: Donbas groups marginally aligned with the DPR and LPR. These groups see total power as the only viable path and will work to endanger the peacekeeping mission. They must be met with force.

## **UNFID GOALS**

A peacekeeping mission offers an opportunity to move the Donbas conflict towards peace and reconciliation. UNFID should be able secure its short-term goals within six months to a year, and medium-term goals within three to five years. However, its long-term objectives can only be achieved through the successful application of peacekeeping forces as well as commitments from all parties to work towards a long-term positive peace.

A phased schedule should secure a fully integrated force deployment within six months to a year. After approving the UNSC resolution, Russia must withdraw any troops in the conflict areas and be completely withdrawn by the end of UNFID's second phase. Ceasefire maintenance and border security is paramount. Once all Russian troops are withdrawn and the border is secure, the United States and allied nations should immediately lift the relevant sanctions against Russia. Hesitation will doom the mission as Russia will continue its illicit activity and Russian troops will threaten all peacekeeping efforts. Within six months of full deployment, UNFID should control and monitor the entirety of the contested Ukraine-Russia border in the Donbas. Once the border is secure, UNFID can start demilitarization efforts and work towards fulfilling

the mission's public service objectives. The OSCE will be a vital partner in the process by engaging in dialogue to defuse tensions and restore stability to the region.<sup>47</sup>

Within three to five years, UNFID, Ukraine, and Russia should work to address the political, economic, and social reintegration of the Donbas. Alongside the OSCE, the conflicting parties should work within the framework of Minsk II to hold elections according to Ukrainian and international law. Ukraine must start decentralization reforms, as outlined in Minsk II, to delegate decision making to the regional level instead of Kiev. These reforms must include discussion about and efforts to address Russia's historic connections to the region as well as formally allow for Russian cultural and language study. With a ceasefire secured, Ukraine can bolster economic ties and assist the region in revitalizing its industrial base via the EU and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The primary objectives of UNFID's short-term and medium-term goals are to transition the Donbas from its conflict-ridden state to a sustainable peace; however, achieving goals requires overcoming immediate challenges, including moving the region towards peaceful representative elections and stable governance. Caution must be exercised while doing this and reforms must be carried out with a clear roadmap and through a slow and deliberate process. The Ukrainian government must be willing to integrate Donbas political representation into its central government. This move is necessary as ensuring those in the Donbas region feel their views are represented in Ukraine's government is critical to preventing future re-escalation of the conflict. As such, if the Ukrainian population determines that Russia offers them the greatest avenue towards success, Kiev must be open to this view.

Another component of achieving UNFID's goals involves addressing Ukraine's future international and economic ties, including the question of Ukraine's relations to NATO and the EU. NATO's attitude toward Russia and the possible addition of Ukraine to the alliance play an important factor in Russia's aggressive regional maneuvers. A commitment by NATO to exclude Ukraine from the organization would mitigate this destabilizing factor in Ukrainian-Russian relations.

The Ukrainian people have made it clear that they wish to pursue stronger EU ties. This relationship must be allowed to continue; however, decisions must be made regarding further economic integration with the CIS. Ukraine need not be a member of either institution but can profit from being at the epicenter of both trade blocs. Dialogue must continue and be encouraged between Ukraine, Russia, and the West in order to reconcile the socio-economic challenges that created the conditions for the Euromaidan protests.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed peacekeeping mission would move mediation and negotiation forward and facilitate an end to the conflict in the Donbas. Minsk II is the only viable avenue for peacebuilding and each stakeholder places great importance on the agreement. UNFID offers the best chance to secure a lasting ceasefire and begin the process of implementing the terms of Minsk II. The UNSC mandate must focus on building transparent institutions and compromises between Ukrainian and Russian interests as part of the peace process. Ultimately, UNFID seeks to establish short-term peace that will allow the Donbas to work towards long-term reintegration and peacebuilding with Ukraine.

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