



Eurasia Center's International Security Program

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Russia, US and NATO discuss the future of European Security/Ukraine



NATO-Russian Council Meeting in Brussels, chaired by Secretary General of NATO General Jens Stoltenberg, January 12, 2022. Photo Credit: NATO

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Eurasia News

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US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov met to discuss Russian President Vladimir Putin's demand that the West not allow Ukraine and other former Soviet bloc nations to join NATO. Denis Balibouse/REUTERS

Russia's relations with Ukraine continue to be tense as many Russian military forces gather near the border. The United States and NATO have warned Russia against military action and have agreed to meet with Russia in order to develop a course of action that would result in a peaceful solution. While the Russian Foreign Ministry maintains that the country never had any intent to invade Ukraine, the United States continues to treat this matter with the utmost importance. However, even before the meetings had occurred, Russia made demands that included having NATO remove its forces from former Soviet bloc states and the NATO states of Eastern Europe.

On January 10th, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov met with United States Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman in order to begin a dialogue between the two countries and how a solution might be found. Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov described this meeting as complex but business like. This statement captures the sentiment that both countries have and that the negotiations are indeed underway. On January 12, 2022, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko and Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin from Russia met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and United States Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman in Brussels. This meeting was intended to directly hear Russia's concerns which mainly revolved around the security concerns from Russia being worried that having the NATO Alliance on Russia's doorstep. Some of the demands that Russia had during these meetings included NATO refraining from deploying military personnel along Russia's borders as well for NATO to cease operations that are building military infrastructure. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken was quoted as saying that he does not expect any breakthroughs to come out of Geneva or Brussels.

With new meetings starting to take place it is important to note what went wrong with prior negotiations like the Minsk Protocol. The Minsk Protocol was intended to be a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine. This agreement between Ukraine and Russia was largely seen as a failure seeing that the first Minsk Protocol was rewritten into the second Minsk Protocol which also was not followed by either country. One of the main reasons that the Minsk Protocols failed was because both sides broke the ceasefire that they agreed to. When one side broke the ceasefire, the other side used it as a justification to cause more violence as well. According to the U.S. Defense Department, Russia has violated the Minsk Protocols by maintaining weapon caches in the Donbas region. A Ukrainian news agency maintained that not a single one of the provisions in the Minsk Protocol had been fully implemented. With neither Ukraine nor Russia fully convinced the other country will uphold their side of the protocol, mutual distrust has caused the protocol to fail. So, learning from the Minsk Protocols, Russia, NATO, and the United States should consider a treaty that depends less on trust and more on the actions of one another.



Alexander Fomin (Deputy Minister of Defence, Russian Federation) with Alexander Grushko (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation) and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

In order for a deal to be struck both sides must agree to some sort of a compromise. Russia is putting pressure on the United States and NATO as it continues its military buildup surrounding Ukraine's eastern border. With the threat of violence from Russia, Russia is looking for leverage over NATO and the United States. Its building up has already forced the US and NATO to the negotiation table. In some respects Russia has succeeded in using the Forums to discuss its security concerns, many of which are created by Putin's early invasion of Ukraine and constant pressure to create a frozen conflict in Crimea and Ukraine. Although Russia maintains that it has no intention of invading the Ukraine, many NATO allies feel that the Russian troops are looking for a pretext for war with Ukraine. The

US and NATO are sharing all its intelligence information with the international media in an effort to show that Russia will be the aggressor in Ukraine once again. The stakes are high for all sides, it will be another tragic conflict in Ukraine if Russia decides to invade. The second and most important question is how will a second invasion of Ukraine help Russia. A free Ukraine will not go back to the future, with Viktor Yanukovich and his "golden toilet." The invasion will break Russia which is already in turmoil due to the Covid crisis and it will stop Nord Stream 2 and other vital economic areas that Russia deems important. The cost of the war and occupation will drain Russia's economy.



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