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**STEINMEIER FORMULA:
UKRAINE MUST NOT AGREE TO RUSSIAN DEMANDS**

On the 1st October 2019, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, announced that during the most recent meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group, Ukraine had agreed to abide by the so-called “Steinmeier Formula”.

What is the Steinmeier Formula?

Authored by the then German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in the autumn of 2015, the concept was designed to implement the political clauses of the Minsk Accords in line with Russia’s interpretation, but against Ukraine’s national interests. The Steinmeier Formula legitimises Russia’s proxies in the so-called “people’s republics” in Donetsk and Luhansk by means of staging local elections. Narrowly interpreted, the concept proposes a series of steps to stage ‘elections’ so as to ‘democratically’ qualify the Russian-controlled territories for a ‘special status’ under the Constitution of Ukraine. More broadly construed, the formula clearly implies staging the ‘elections’ whilst Russia remains in Ukraine and whilst controlling both sides of the Ukraine-Russia border in East Ukraine.

The proposal put forward is in agreement with the Russian interpretation that the withdrawal of foreign or unlawful forces and the restoration of Ukrainian control and sovereignty can only be negotiated after internationally recognised local elections. As such, the formula suggests it is possible to hold democratically valid elections under circumstances of Russian military control and under Russian installed local administrations. The Steinmeier Formula is the political guise for a solution on Moscow’s terms.

The application of the concept necessitates Ukraine’s consent as the internationally recognised legal holder of sovereignty over the territory of Russian occupied Donbas. Thus far, Ukraine had successfully resisted pressure from Russia, Germany and France to codify the Steinmeier Formula into either the Normandy Four or Minsk negotiation process.

UIS London Statement

The announcement from the Zelensky administration has troubled UIS London, an organisation that has advocated for Ukraine in the UK for over 70 years. Therefore, we join the Ukrainian World Congress in asking for clarity and transparency from the government of Ukraine regarding any agreement to hold elections in areas of Ukraine currently occupied by Russia.

We reaffirm that Ukraine must never agree to Russian demands regarding Ukrainian elections, or Ukraine’s constitutionally mandated strategic course of NATO and EU integration.

To that end, Ukraine must maintain a clear and unequivocal position that:

1. No elections can take place in the Russian-occupied regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts until all Russian troops, mercenaries, weapons and material are withdrawn from Ukrainian territory,

2. Ukraine regains complete control of the Ukrainian side of the Ukraine-Russia border and the displaced residents of Donbas are able to peacefully return to their homes; any elections held in Ukraine, must stand in accord with the constitution and laws of Ukraine;
3. Ukraine's strategic course for Euro-Atlantic and NATO integration, as set out in Ukraine's Constitution, is non-negotiable and immutable;
4. International sanctions on Russia must be strengthened and expanded until Russia de-occupies sovereign Ukrainian territory, including Crimea and regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (regions). Following the complete withdrawal of covert and overt Russian forces and equipment from Ukraine, the international community which had tolerated Russia's occupation of Ukraine must provide remedial support to individuals and communities traumatised by five years of exposure to Soviet-style propaganda and hate speech while living under Russian occupation; such efforts would include funding community bridge-building, psychosocial counselling and peace building resources to strengthen local capacities for reconciliation

The red lines on many issues, including the Steinmeier Formula, have been drawn. UIS joins the global call from the Ukrainian diaspora to President Zelensky and his administration to hold firm on them.

“We have endured Russian bullying for many years, and whilst we all want peace for Ukraine, this cannot come at the cost of sovereignty. Capitulating to Russian demands forsakes the values and principles of those 14,000 soldiers and civilians who have given their lives for Ukraine. Donbas – and Crimea too – were, are, and will be again, a fundamental part of Ukraine.” – said UIS CEO, Petro Kornylo.

London, 3rd October 2019.

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