

Putin and Merkel meet for the second time; hope to resolve Syrian war and Ukrainian crisis among other matters



Merkel said she and Putin would discuss the prospects of a UN peacekeeping mission in Eastern Europe/LT

Historically, Germany and Russia were allies for a long time. Germany was Russia's most important trading partner during the Soviet era. The strain in their relations began when Russia annexed Crimea and supported rebels in eastern Ukraine. However, it seems like the two nations are moving forward while leaving their past behind; Saturday saw the second meeting in three months between Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the German Government's villa in Meseberg, outside of Berlin.

The prime topics to be discussed in this meeting were Syria, Ukraine as well as the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. The meeting was not set with the intention of reaching any particular conclusions or outcomes, but rather as a continuation of their meeting Sochi in May of this year in Sochi. Dmitry Peskov, the spokesman of Kremlin told reporters that "no agreements were reached". The pipeline project is being seen as a purely commercial endeavour by both Putin and Merkel. However, this project has drawn a lot of fire from the United States' and Ukrainian Governments. The United States feels that if this deal reaches fruition, Germany will be completely dependent on Russia for their energy. Another reason why this deal is so controversial is because pipeline will be located under the Baltic Sea and will transport gas, roughly 110 cubic meters a year, to Germany from Russia. Even though it will pass transit countries like Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland and others, they will not receive their current transport fees. Merkel is trying to convince Putin, and by extension Russia, to include Ukraine in this project. So far, Putin has said that he will consider this proposition. The pipeline is scheduled to be completed in 2019.

Ms Merkel said in a statement, "Germany, but especially Russia, as a member of the U.N. Security Council, has a responsibility to find solutions. I am of the opinion that controversial issues can only be addressed in dialogue, and through dialogue." Both representatives are concerned about the issues created by the seven-year-old war, in addition to the refugees that have come into existence. Ms Merkel is also of the belief that efforts should be taken to avert the crisis in Idlib, Syria and the surrounding regions. She has also decided to allow more than 1 million people - refugees from the war - to seek asylum in Germany. This decision is being strongly resisted by the general public of Germany as well as her own Government. Stefan Meister, a member of the German Council on Foreign Relations said, "It

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is in the domestic political interest of the German government that Syrian refugees be able to return to a stable Syria.”

Focusing on Ukraine, Merkel said that she hoped new and more effective steps would be taken at the beginning of the new school year to disentangle Ukrainian military forces and the separatists on the front lines in the Donbass region.

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