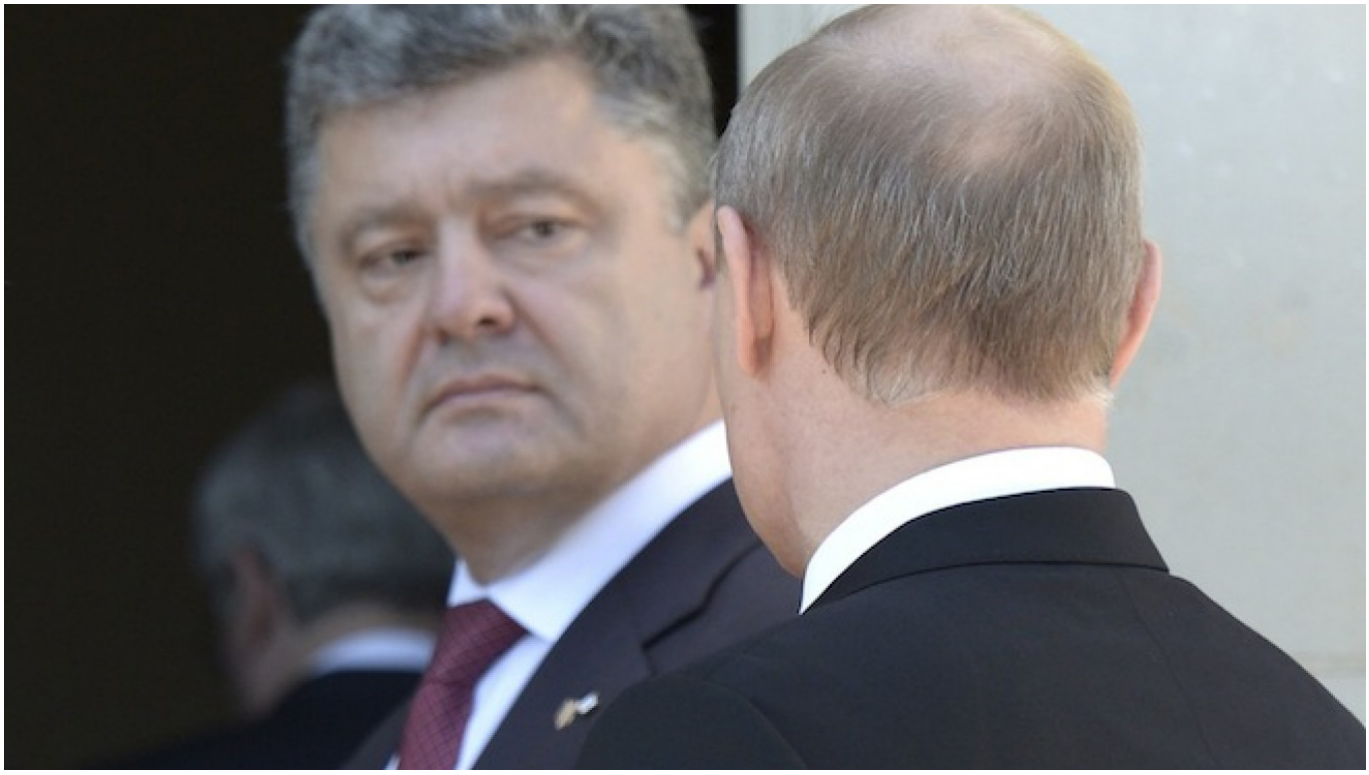
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Putin Could Meet Ukraine's Poroshenko Next Week For Talks

By The Moscow Times

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Ukrainian President-elect Petro Poroshenko (L) and Russian President Vladimir Putin talk after a group photo during the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Benouville, France.

Russian President Vladimir Putin could hold talks with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko next week on the sidelines of a summit of Asian and European leaders in Milan, the Kremlin said on Thursday.

Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov confirmed Putin would attend the ASEM (Europe-Asia Meeting) summit in the northern Italian city on Oct. 16-17 and said German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande might take part in the talks with Poroshenko.

"A series of meetings is planned with Western partners, where Ukraine will be the key theme," TASS news agency quoted Ushakov as saying.

He said a "Normandy-style meeting" could not be ruled out — a reference to talks in France in June that involved Putin, Merkel, Hollande and Poroshenko.

Putin also met Poroshenko in August in the Belarussian capital Minsk, where they agreed on the need for a cease-fire in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatists rose up in April. A cease-fire was agreed on Sept. 5 and is still in place, although some fighting has continued.

Ushakov said on Sept. 26 that Poroshenko and Putin had discussed the possibility of a meeting in the next three weeks, alone or in a multilateral format.

The European Union and the United States have imposed sanctions on Russia over the conflict in Ukraine, where Moscow has annexed the Crimea peninsula and is accused by the West of providing the separatists with troops and weapons.

Moscow denies the accusations but Ushakov said Putin would not ask Western leaders to lift the sanctions.

The ASEM meeting is also being attended by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, who will visit Russia on his way to Italy, and by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Ushakov said a meeting was also possible with Abe, whose country has imposed sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine crisis but has been trying to improve relations with Moscow.

In further diplomacy on the Ukraine crisis, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry are expected to meet in Paris on Oct. 14.

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