

Ukraine's President Wants to Meet Putin in Minsk

By [Reuters](#)

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Volodymyr Zelenskiy president.gov.ua

Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said on Monday he was ready to meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Minsk for talks that he said should also involve Germany, Britain, the United States and France.

Relations between Ukraine and Russia have been very strained since Moscow's annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 and its support for armed separatists in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine, in a conflict that has killed 13,000 people.

A ceasefire agreement signed in the Belarusian capital Minsk in 2015, with French and German support, has had only limited success in ending hostilities.

"And now I want to turn to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Need to talk? It is necessary. Let's discuss to whom Crimea belongs and who is not there in the Donbass," Zelenskiy said in

a social media video, without elaborating.

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Zelenskiy, a comic actor with no previous political experience, swept to power after an April presidential election. He has said previously he is ready to negotiate with Russia to end the war in eastern Ukraine while sticking to Kiev's goal of one day joining the European Union and NATO — anathema to Putin.

The Kremlin said it would consider Zelenskiy's offer.

"We need to understand whether there is a prospect for such a meeting, we need to understand what kind of new format is being proposed," the state-run TASS news agency quoted Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying.

"This is a new initiative. Of course, it will be considered, but so far I cannot give any reaction."

In Monday's statement, Zelenskiy also criticised a proposal, now abandoned, from Ukrainian politician Viktor Medvedchuk, who is known for his pro-Russian views, for a joint online conference with Russian state TV to help end the war in eastern Ukraine.

Zelenskiy said the plan was "a cheap but dangerous" attempt to divide Ukrainians into two camps again ahead of parliamentary elections due on July 21.

Opinion polls suggest Zelenskiy's Servant of the People party, which is campaigning on a pro-European, anti-graft ticket, will win the election, with Medvedchuk's Opposition Platform in second place.

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