

Newly installed President Poroshenko pledges to militarise Ukraine and crush rebellion in the east

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With US Vice President Joseph Biden in the audience, Petro Poroshenko, a billionaire confectioner, was formally sworn in Saturday as president of Ukraine. Delivering a bellicose speech, he pledged to confront Russia, suppress the separatists in Ukraine's east and fully militarise the country. At the same time, he alluded to his plans to impose brutal austerity measures on the Ukrainian working class.

Poroshenko began by paying homage to the fascistic forces that spearheaded his installation, via a US- and European Union-backed putsch in February followed by an election held May 25 amid a reign of terror and military violence in eastern Ukraine. He enthused over the "victorious revolution" by "Ukrainian patriots" and "warriors."

While the Western media portrayed it as a powerful performance, the speech only underscored the fact that Poroshenko is nothing but a front man for German and particularly American imperialism, and is entirely dependent on them. Adopting a provocative stance toward Russia, he declared he would never accept Moscow's annexation of Crimea and vowed to repudiate the Budapest Agreement that restricts the deployment of Western military forces within former Soviet states.

"Russia occupied Crimea, which was, is and will be Ukrainian soil," Poroshenko insisted. Referring to a brief meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin during the D-Day commemoration in France, he said: "Yesterday, in the course of the meeting in Normandy, I told this to President Putin: Crimea is Ukraine soil. Period. There can be no compromise on the issues of Crimea, European choice and state structure."

Fresh from talks in France with US President Barack Obama, Poroshenko rejected any negotiations with pro-Russian separatist forces in Ukraine's east. He vowed

instead to swiftly put an end to the resistance to February's pro-Western, fascist-led coup in Kiev.

He depicted those holding control in dozens of eastern cities and towns as "bandits," "criminals," "terrorists" and "Russian mercenaries," foreshadowing a renewed offensive by the Ukrainian military and allied right-wing militias.

Even as Poroshenko spoke, there was an assassination attempt on Denis Pushilin, a pro-Russian leader in Donetsk, resulting in the shooting death of an assistant, Maksym Petruhin. Photographs on Ukrainian news sites showed Petruhin, wearing a business suit, lying face down on a street alongside a parked car with at least seven bullet holes in the rear door panel.

"For peace to become lasting, we must get used to living in constant combat readiness," the tycoon known as Ukraine's "chocolate king" declared. "We have to keep the gunpowder dry. The army and its re-equipment by means of national military-industrial complex is our top priority... Our army must become a true elite of the Ukrainian community."

Insisting that "great sacrifices" would have to be made by the Ukrainian population, Poroshenko stated: "Those who grudge money for the armed forces feed the foreign army... Our most reliable allies and the best guarantors of peace are our army, fleet, the National Guard and professional special forces."

At a meeting with Poroshenko, Biden reiterated American support for his regime. "America's with you," Biden said. "That is not hyperbole."

In conjunction with Biden's visit, the White House announced \$48 million in new aid to Ukraine, as well as \$8 million for Moldova and \$5 million for Georgia, both of which are also expected to sign agreements with the EU this month.

According to the White House statement, the aid would help the Ukrainian government “conduct key reforms, build law enforcement capacity, and strengthen national unity.” It specifically committed the US to supporting Ukraine’s “sovereignty and territorial integrity” and “economic development,” including “the reforms needed to make its IMF and World Bank programs.”

Poroshenko promised to move swiftly to an economic agreement with the EU from which Ukraine’s former government backed away last November, fearing the social unrest that would be triggered by the austerity dictates of the EU and the International Monetary Fund. “My pen is in my hands,” he said, pointing out that the EU association agreement was but the first step “towards fully-fledged membership of Ukraine in the European Union.”

The unelected interim government installed in February has already begun to implement the austerity measures demanded by the EU and IMF, including scrapping domestic energy subsidies and allowing the currency, the hryvnia, to depreciate about 30 percent against the US dollar. Average gas prices for Ukrainian households began rising by more than 50 percent in May, and heating prices are expected to climb by about 40 percent, starting in July.

Far harsher measures are still to come, including a freeze on public-sector wages, mass redundancies of government workers, the cancellation of scheduled pension increases and a range of social spending cuts.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported concerns about Poroshenko’s capacity to deliver. “It looks like people are ready to accept this decline in living standards,” Vitaliy Vavryshchuk, head of research at Kiev-based investment house SP Advisors, told the newspaper, but Ukrainians expected economic improvement. “Patience is not unlimited,” he warned.

For all the efforts of the Western powers and the compliant media to dress up Poroshenko as a popular and democratic figure, he is a particularly venal representative of the corrupt Ukrainian elites that enriched themselves by looting the assets of the former Soviet Union. He held senior cabinet posts under both the pro-Western government of President Viktor Yushchenko that followed the US- and EU-backed 2004 “Orange Revolution” and, after Yushchenko’s disgrace, the Moscow-aligned leadership of recently ousted President Viktor Yanukovich.

Having served as Yushchenko’s foreign minister and Yanukovich’s trade minister, Poroshenko is well-known

in the Western corridors of power as a pliable instrument for promoting their interests.

Russian President Vladimir Putin who, like Poroshenko, represents the oligarchy that arose from the liquidation of the Soviet Union, is desperately trying to reach an accommodation with the Kiev regime and Washington. At a press conference, after meeting with Poroshenko for about 15 minutes in France, he declared: “I liked his attitude,” adding: “I cannot but welcome the position of Poroshenko on the necessity to end the bloodletting immediately in the east of Ukraine.”

There is every indication that Putin is prepared to give Poroshenko a free hand to crush the resistance in eastern Ukraine. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that for weeks, “Mr Putin has been sending back-channel messages to the West trying to distance the Kremlin from the actions of the rebels and suggesting it was prepared to support efforts to de-escalate violence in eastern Ukraine.”

Moscow returned its ambassador, Mikhail Zurabov, to Kiev to attend the inaugural festivities, and Russian news agencies reported that Putin had ordered tighter controls on the border to prevent people from crossing to fight against the regime in Kiev.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande reportedly arranged the French meeting between Putin and Poroshenko, seeking to facilitate a settlement. German and French imperialism, while fully backing the Kiev coup, have close economic and energy ties with Russia, as well as their own historic aspirations to dominate Ukraine and Russia. Washington, however, has made it clear that it intends to fully pursue its underlying agenda: to exploit the Ukrainian crisis in order to subjugate Russia and transform it into a US semi-colony.



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