

# Escalation in Eastern Ukraine as a result of American Involvement in Negotiation process

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Starting from Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> July, we witnessed military escalation in Eastern Ukraine. Informational centre of Anti-Terror operation says about 10 deaths among Ukrainian soldiers since 19<sup>th</sup> of July.

This situation raises questions about causes and expected consequences of the current escalation.

In order to understand what is going on we should mention some important developments that occurred last month.

Let's list them:

1. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, the first day of G20 summit, the US Department of State announced establishing a new post - United States Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations and appointing of Kurt Volker to that post.

2. In the same day, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, the first meeting between Trump and Putin was organized during G20 summit.

After that meeting neither Trump, nor Putin gave any comments about details. Trump said, "We discussed many issues", as for Putin he said that, "We discussed international problems and bilateral relations".

Head of Russian MOF S. Lavrov informed about agreement to initiate a channel for Ukrainian crisis settlement based on Minsk agreements, while the head of US Department of State announced the visit of Kurt Volker to Moscow.

3. At Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> of July head of so called "Donetsk people republic" Alexander Zaharchenko has announced the formation of a new state called Malorossia, which according to his statements will be created from some regions of "former Ukraine". It is obvious that during last years, Zaharchenko merely retranslates positions that he is informed by curators from Russia. Next day after this announcement pro-Russian rebel groups initiated intensive fire on positions of Ukrainian armed forces.

We should also mention the following details:

The appointment of United States Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations occurred when there was no progress in settlement of conflict in East of Ukraine. Establishing of such a post obviously demonstrates the intentions of US to be more involved in settlement of Ukrainian crisis. Early the position of US consisted of observing the efforts of Normandy Four and waiting the moment when tired of unsuccessful efforts Normandy Four will appeal to US, for US to aid the process as a mediator.

It is confirmed by the following facts:

At 23<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 during regular meeting of Normandy Four ministers of foreign affairs in Paris Germany, France and Russia leaders did not supported the idea of adding US to Normand format.

But at 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 during joint press-conference in Moscow ministers of foreign affairs of Russia and Germany supported the participation of US in settlement of conflict in East of Ukraine.

Lavrov mentioned that all conflicts are solved by the help of US. His German colleague Sigmar Gabriel also added that in the issue of implementation of Minsk agreements in Donbass they are interested in applying American influence.

But US continued to avoid involvement until the beginning of July 2017. Helplessness of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine on resolving the crisis allowed a senior State Department official to say these words during briefing:

“I would say that all of the members of the Normandy format – France, Germany, Ukraine, and Russia – have expressed their desire to have a U.S. counterpart that they can work with in the negotiations, not as a member of the Normandy format but as an important support to that format and collaborator with those countries as they negotiate implementation of the Minsk agreements”.

At 7<sup>th</sup> of July US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said: “As a reply to request of President Putin we appointed Kurt Volker as United States Special Representative for Ukraine”.

Thereby, US were patiently waiting for a moment when helplessness of Normandy Four will force them to apply for help to US.

It is worse to mention that judging by comments that were given by the participants of meeting between Trump and Putin, Russia and US were not able to achieve agreement on Ukraine, while the involvement of US in peace negotiations as already initiated in form of appointing Kurt Volker. Thereby, Russia is concerned that involvement of US will lead to negative consequences for Russia.

Taking in consideration all mentioned above we can conclude that most probably the cause of announcement of Malorossia and escalation in East of Ukraine is Russia's desire to secure its positions on the threshold of new negotiations on Ukrainian crisis. When a new participant, namely US as a mediator, joins negotiation process Russia seeks to raise the stakes and point on negative consequences that its opponents will face if the solution on Ukrainian crisis will be unfavourable for Russia.

This conclusion is confirmed by the following developments that occurred last two weeks:

When Kurt Volker during his visit to Donbass was asked about awareness of US that situation in Donbass is a result of Russian aggression he replied: “Yes, we are aware of this. We see and understand what is going on, how this conflict began and how it is managed now”.

At 2<sup>th</sup> of July Trump signed law that applies new sanctions on Russia. This is the best manifestation that meeting during G20 summit resulted in no agreement between US and Russia. It is worse to mention that after that Russia decided to reduce and deport US embassy officials.

This situation forced Russian Prime Minister D. Medvedev to say: "The hope for improving our relations with the new U.S. administration is now over".

The all above-mentioned show us that US was more agile and skilful than Russia that lacks ideology and Europe that is intimidated by Russia aggression and also suffers from sanctions.

Silly Russia believed that foreign policy of US is formed solely by US president and believed that Trump is a friend of Russia, so Russia agreed with involving US to Normandy format. And now being shocked by its political mistake Russia being non ideological state can't invent any political manoeuvres and as usual resorts to escalation.

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