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The Warlords of Kiev

By Justin Raimondo
February 9, 2017

The warlords of Kiev are going on the offensive, violating the terms of the Minsk peace accords, and attacking separatist rebels in the eastern part of the country in a desperate bid to provoke open conflict with Russia. What motivates them is fear of President Donald Trump, who has often expressed a desire to “get along with Russia” and who has openly said Ukraine is not a vital US national security interest. What motivates their new aggression is the possibility that the US subsidies that have kept their vicious war on their own people going – 10,000 killed so far – will dry up.

Ever since US and European Union-backed shock troops overthrew the democratically elected government of President Viktor Yanukovich, the coup leaders in Kiev have waged a relentless war against their rebellious subjects in the east. As “President” Petro Poroshenko put it:

“We will have jobs, they won’t! We will have pensions, they won’t! We will have benefits for retirees and children, they won’t! Our kids will go to schools and daycares, their kids will sit in the basements! They can’t do anything about it... And only this is how we will win this war!”

To the great shame of American policymakers, the United States has backed this monster to the hilt, sending billions in “foreign aid” to what is no doubt the most corrupt country in Europe and even sending US soldiers to “train” Poroshenko’s killers. Yet even Washington’s propagandists at “Radio Free Europe” have reported that the Ukrainian army is responsible for the current upsurge in fighting:

“Since mid-December Ukraine’s armed forces have edged farther into parts of the gray zone in or near the war-worn cities of Avdiivka, Debaltseve, Dokuchaievsk, Horlivka, and Mariupol, shrinking the space between them and the separatist fighters.”

These actions are a clear violation of the “Minsk II” accord, signed by “President” Poroshenko and representatives of the EU nations and Russia on February 15, 2015, which provide for a ceasefire and a “gray zone” separating the two sides. The Ukrainian military has violated both of these provisions, and the coup leaders in Kiev have stubbornly resisted all efforts to implement the political reforms stipulated in the agreement: local autonomy for the eastern provinces, the resumption of government services, new elections, and the ending of the economic blockade that stopped the delivery of everything but coal. And now even coal deliveries coming from the east to fuel-starved western provinces are being blocked by ultra-nationalist paramilitary groups, which have joined the fighting and announced that they are there to stop “smuggling” by separatists. Oh, but don’t worry, Uncle Sam will step in to save the day.

Ukrainian incursions into Crimea, which resulted in the death of a Russian soldier and a Russian FSB officer, have now been supplemented by the assassination of rebel commanders: comically, Western “reporting” attributes these killings – about half a dozen so far – to *the Russians*, although the evidence they present consists solely of assertions by the Kiev authorities and their supporters. And this is in spite of the fact that the so-called “People’s Militia” – a clandestine pro-Ukrainian outfit operating in the breakaway Luhansk Republic – has taken responsibility for at least two of these terrorist attacks.

“Fake news” is especially rife when it comes to reporting on Ukraine.

While deputy NATO chief Rose Gottemoeller has announced the “unanimous” support of the alliance for this latest escalation of Ukraine’s war against its own people, President Trump may not concur. “We don’t really exactly know” what is happening in Ukraine, Trump told Fox News in an interview, but he vowed to find out. He added that he’d be “surprised” if Russia escalated the conflict shortly after he talked with Putin by phone, as Sen. John McCain, a longtime supporter of the Kiev regime, avers. What seems more likely is that Ukraine launched its renewed military campaign after news of the Trump-Putin call hit the headlines.

During the presidential campaign, Trump’s comments on Ukraine reflected his general inclination to stay out of the conflict. Asked about the issue by the *New York Times*, he said:

“And one of the things that I hated seeing is Ukraine.... Why is it always the United States that gets right in the middle of things, with something that – you know, it affects us, but not nearly as much as it affects other countries.”

Trump snubbed a meeting with Poroshenko, even as then Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk denounced him for committing “a breach of moral and civilized principles.” And the efforts by the Ukrainian government to ambush candidate Trump during the campaign, which led to the resignation of Paul Manafort as Trump’s campaign manager, are well-known.

Trump's defiance of the anti-Russian hysteria that has gripped the political class and the media makes a continuation of Washington's unconditional support to Kiev unlikely. However, there are factions within the Trump administration that are sure to resist any settlement of the Ukrainian conflict, not to mention a rapprochement with Russia. That UN Ambassador Nikki Haley's first act was to repeat the same baloney about "Russian aggression" – when it is clearly the Ukrainians who are upping the ante – is not a good sign.

My guess is that President Trump will be so preoccupied with the war at home – battling powerful forces in both parties out to undermine his administration – that he'll have little time to focus on Ukraine. And his efforts to establish a détente with Russia are being harried on all sides: a bipartisan coalition in Congress is readying legislation to prevent him from lifting the sanctions on Russia, and in the media the campaign to paint him as "Putin's puppet," as media darling Hillary Clinton often put it, has been unrelenting. So the prospects of stopping the war in Ukraine as part of a comprehensive agreement with Vladimir Putin are fading, even as Ukrainian military provocations reach a deadly climax.

The Ukraine issue is linked to number of local hotspots that can only be resolved peacefully if détente with Russia is achieved – and there are so many actors, both foreign and domestic, determined to quash this outcome that Trump will have a major problem overcoming them. The War Party's favorite foreign proxies – not only the coup leaders in Kiev but also Syria's Islamist "rebels" – are counting on their allies in the capitals of Europe and in Washington, D.C., to prevail. Whether Trump can stand against this tide and carry out his "America first" foreign policy despite this powerful resistance remains to be seen.