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Europe under Washington's Order

By Sergey Maximov

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The United States has sparked a real big fire in the Middle East. Now it has shifted its attention to Europe where the allies started to feel too free at the time of Russia-US «reset». Large-scale NATO exercises conducted in the vicinity of the borders with Russia and Belarus, directing money flows and arms supplies to Poland, the talks about the inevitability of Ukraine's entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – it all goes to show the White House is going to ultimately abandon the policy of «partnership with Russia» which it had to declare when its military forces «were fighting international terrorism»...

Now the war is over. The US is getting friendly with the Taliban, Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brothers which have become its partners at the negotiation table. All of a sudden the Islamists have become US friends in Syria while the anti-terrorist coalition partner once again got the status of «potential enemy of NATO».

There is nothing to be surprised about.

The US is always a loser in the geopolitical competition in Eurasia when Europeans realize the «threat from the East» is illusory and lose interest in preserving American presence in the space stretching from the Atlantic to the Carpathians Mountains. The normal relationship between Europe and Russia is like a stake in the heart of a vampire for the United States.

The classic Anglo-Saxon strategy since the end of the Second World War is aimed at excluding the situation when the good old Europe would start to have doubts about the expediency of everlasting «Atlantic solidarity». The demonization of the Kremlin and provoking conflicts with Moscow is the true and tried method of getting Europeans tied to the American nuclear «umbrella» that serves no purpose as soon as the rain stops.

America needs Russia to be hostile like a badly suffering drug addict needs a new dose. That's why having played a game of «partnership», Washington inevitably starts to ignite tensions in the Russian-United States relations to insert the poison of mistrust towards Moscow into the veins of European politics. Actually it has already launched the process. Of course, Poland is the leader among the coalition of the willing to join the Washington's efforts.

One should give the devil his due; the current Polish leadership does a lot to find a way to mutual understanding between Moscow and Warsaw. But it has to take into account that the tendency to link the tragic events of the country's history with the contemporary reality is a predominant tendency among the Polish conservative circles and the society in general. Many Poles perceive the fact of having common borders with Germany in the West, Russia in the North, as well as borders with Belarus and the Baltic states, as the major threat to the security of the third Rzeczpospolita. Washington takes advantage of the situation. It uses Poland as a tool to intimidate Europeans making them believe that Russia has «imperial ambitions». At that, there is a collateral effect here – involving Poland into the major Anglo-Saxon games facilitates the shaping of Germany's image as an imperial state.

The recent NATO *Steadfast Jazz 2013* held on the territories of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia was presented by Polish media as a «Polish-French response» to Russia though indirectly it was a response to Germany too because there were 1200 French and 1040 Polish servicemen out of six thousand troops participating in the maneuvers, while the German contribution was limited only by 55 men strong medical staff group. Washington was an initiator, but limited its participation by only 160 troops. Perhaps it was pursuing quite a different goal. The Americans want to make Europeans think that they are left alone to deal with Russia and Germany while the United States decided to keep away from it all. This tactics work when dealing with Europeans.

The instigation of anti-Russian and, in more covert form, anti-German, hysteria may have a method in its madness. There are warnings coming from Moscow that it will react accordingly to the deployment of missile defense components on the territory of Poland. Russian politicians and military express perplexity over the policy aimed at boosting the Polish army's strike capabilities. This reaction is viewed as a threat to the entire Central and Eastern Europe coming from Russia. Germany displays no wish to carry the heavy burden of European defense on its shoulders among other things. It is presented as the Berlin's indifferent attitude towards the Moscow's imperial policy or something similar to a tangible sign of new collusion between Germany and Russian against Europe.

Scaring themselves with the stories about «eastern barbarians» and «insidious Germans» Poland and the Baltic states exert pressure on the Federal Republic of Germany to make it demonstrate the Atlantic solidarity when it comes to Russia so that the two countries would be at loggerheads. At the same time they ask the United States for help, complaining it has abandoned the Eastern

Europeans recently acceded to the Western structures, leaving them alone with the «aggressive» Germans and Russians. The Washington returns to the scene of European politics as the one to unite Europe against the threat making the exercises be joined not by NATO members only, but by such non-aligned countries as Sweden and Finland as well. Actually nobody had doubts which direction these two countries are moving in. But it's hard to understand what made Ukraine send a contingent twice as large as the one of Germany to take part in *Steadfast Jazz 2013*.

The Brussels-based NATO headquarters officials assured the exercises were not aimed at the Russian Federation and its allies. But the scenario speaks for itself. Poland and the Baltic states were threatened by an unnamed state aspiring to establish its domination in Central and Eastern Europe. Upon their request NATO brought rapid reaction forces to Poland, Lithuania and Latvia to deter the aggressor during the deployment of major forces. The NATO ground and air units were to be stationed at the borders with Russia and Belarus, while the naval forces were to cut off the eastern part of the Baltic Sea. It's hard to believe that it was Estonia, a NATO member, which was viewed as a potential enemy.

It shows that the United States-led North Atlantic alliance has thrown away the fig leaf of «partnership with Russia» and made it be known in no uncertain terms which direction its strategy will evolve after the infamous operation in Afghanistan is over.

How come the Ukraine, the state keeping away from participation in any alliances, agreed to take part in this kind of NATO exercise?

Of course, to some extent, it could be understood. The close cooperation between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Alliance presupposes getting funds. It is a significant factor in view of financial woes faced by Ukrainian military. Some experts say the current Ukrainian leadership is tacitly implementing the policy aimed at joining NATO – the very same political course started by the previous administration of President Yushchenko. Are they right?

It's not that easy to come up with a definite answer. There are signs that Kiev believes that its staying out of blocks is just a pause, a time to take breath. That's what Viktor Shlinchak, Chair of the Supervisory Board, Institute of World Policy in Kiev, Ukraine, said some time ago speaking at an international forum held in the Ukrainian capital. The wrap-up article the Institute published after the event is called *Ukraine-NATO: Calm Before Entry*.

Natalia Nemyliwska, a Canadian citizen of Ukrainian origin, Director of NATO Information and Documentation Center in Ukraine, spoke by and large along the same lines. Another participant of the forum former Minister of National Defence MP Rasa Juknevičienė, called on Ukrainians to get back to the idea of NATO entry once again, because, as she believes, it provides political guarantee of statehood the very same way the membership in the European Union does. According to her, «*Ukraine and its armed forces are ready to join NATO in case there is a political will*». Poland's former Minister of Defence Janusz Onyszewicz put it in no uncertain terms as well. He flatly refused to consider any options for guaranteeing European security with the participation of Russia and Belarus emphasizing that Ukraine should pursue the goal to enter NATO because that is the only alliance to provide military support of other states in emergency.

Alexander Zatynayko, Director of Department for Military Policy and Strategic Planning, said the cooperation with NATO in the field of security and defense is an imperative allowing Ukraine to join the European Union. This way he once again confirmed the tacitly concealed fact that Ukraine cannot enter the European Union without becoming a NATO member. Ukraine's former Foreign Minister Vladimir Ogryzko made no bones about it saying the non-aligned status of Ukraine should only be a time break before the full-fledged NATO membership. As to him, the neutrality means conducting a foreign policy without sense that leads to the loss of state's political independence.

The forum «Ukraine – NATO» also included into the agenda the Kiev's role in the Common Defense and Security Policy (CDSP), which actually serves as an instrument of getting Ukraine embroiled into the «Big Game». A statement of Poland's Minister of Defence appeared right after the termination of *Steadfast Jazz 2013* exercise on the Ukraine's Defence Ministry's website saying the training event is a harbinger of growing fruitful cooperation between Ukraine and Poland, the countries which are working to create a Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian brigade and Ukraine's accession to the Vyshegrad combat group.

The idea of establishing a military formation of Vyshegrad Four with Ukraine's participation is not new. It appeared in 2007 when then President Victor Yushchenko tried to ram Ukraine through into NATO. Then the concept was forgotten. Now Washington has revived the favorite Anglo-Saxon tactics of driving a wedge between Europe and Russia, so the idea is given a second lease on life.

It has started to acquire a concrete pattern after the March 2013 Vyshegrad Group defence summit in Warsaw. Then the defence ministers of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic signed an agreement to create a three thousand strong joint rapid reaction force. Poland will exercise the command functions; the unit's headquarters will be also located on Polish soil. The Polish servicemen will account for half of the force's strength. According to plans, the force will become operational by early 2016.

The formation of V4 combat group is implemented within the framework of the European Union and NATO because the Vyshegrad group countries are full-fledged members of the both organizations.

What are the European Union's Common Defense and Security Policy? Actually it's the European element of NATO without the United States of America. Formally it says Europeans want to have its own defense capability in case the United States sticks to the policy of isolation and refuses to commit its armed forces to the European Union's defense. Obviously, the argument is laughable; almost all European Union states are also NATO members. What about invoking article 5 of the Washington Treaty? The article is binding and presupposes the United States must defend its European allies. Leaving aside all this play of words, the European Union's Common Defense and Security Policy is the very same pattern of creating pacts which exclude Russia and Belarus from the process of creating security space in Europe. At that, the both countries are viewed as potential enemies. The question is: will Ukraine, a state which is not a member of any block, take part in this project? Yes or no?

Somehow it all fits really well into the efforts applied by the United States to get the North Atlantic Alliance back to the mission it was created for: to maintain US presence in Europe, to keep Russia away and let Germany be tied by the concept of «United Europe». Last year NATO limited its training activities by exercises to prepare personnel for peacekeeping missions, as well as natural or industrial disasters. This year the Alliance promised to hold large-scale annual exercises in Europe like if the security situation has become different now. Though nothing seems to be changed. If only an idea to provoke the changes on purpose has not appeared in the heads of NATO decision makers.

There is something to think about in Moscow, Minsk and other capitals of the Organization for Collective Security. Perhaps in Kiev too.