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The Kerry-Lavrov chess match

By Pepe Escobar

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It's hardly a match between equals - as one is playing Monopoly while the other plays chess. It's as if Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has been postponing his checkmate, while US Secretary of State John Kerry increasingly realizes he's facing the inevitable.

Lavrov has explained over and over again, a loose federation is the only possible solution for Ukraine, as part of a "deep constitutional reform". That would imply ethnic - and even sentimentally - Russian eastern and southern Ukraine would be largely autonomous. Kerry gave signs of agreeing around two weeks ago that Ukrainian regions need more decision power; but then the White House recharged its moral blitzkrieg - coinciding with President Barack Obama's trip to The Hague and Brussels. Still, even after an inconclusive four-hour Kerry-Lavrov chess match in Paris, there will be a checkmate.

The Russian solution is the same plan proposed by Moscow already a few weeks ago, and again discussed on the phone by Obama and President Vladimir Putin on Friday - which prompted Kerry to redirect his flight to Paris. Each Ukrainian region, according to Lavrov, would be able to control its economy, taxes, culture, language, education and "external economic and cultural connections with neighboring countries or regions". That's such a sound plan that even former - or perennial, depending on spin - cold warriors such as Henry Kissinger and Zbig Brzezinski reasonably agree.

The key problem is that Washington immovably considers the present Kiev set up - also known as the Khaganate of Nulands, as in State Department Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nulands - as legitimate. Moscow sees them as a bunch of putschists and fascists. And Washington still refuses to press Kiev to accept a federal system - thus allowing, among other things, Russian as an official second language.

The latest American stunt is a massive propaganda drive of "The Reds are coming" kind, about Russian troops massing at the border(pliant corporate media spins numbers over 100,000).

Kerry, for the moment, is at least refraining from hysteria; he admits Washington and Moscow agree a diplomatic solution is a must, just to revert to the new meme - the artificial, Pentagon/NATO-spun "prelude to an invasion".

Washington's official position remains that Moscow must disarm its forces in Crimea (it won't happen); admit international observers (it might happen); and pull troops back from the eastern border (Moscow argues these are exercises, with the same number as usual - fewer than 20,000). Lavrov having to stress over and over again there are no Russian plans to invade eastern Ukraine sound almost like a punch line in stand-up comedy.

Beware The Empire of Chaos

Then there are the upcoming presidential elections. Rivers of vodka may be bet that that will be an extremely dodgy operation. The Svoboda and Right Sector goons currently in positions of power will do everything to tamper with the results (as they are not exactly popular). After German Chancellor Angela Merkel's horse - former boxer "Klitsch" - decided to abandon the race, the leader is - what else - an oligarch: billionaire chocolate tycoon Petro Poroshenko. He already dismissed the federal solution, as in "somebody in the Russian government trying to tell us what type of governmental system we should have".

And there's nothing about "democracy" to start with, as the regime changers, as reported by Kommersant, are in full speed already rewriting the Ukrainian constitution, with Prime Minister "Yats" Arseniy Yatseniuk urging them to come up with the final redaction within the next two weeks.

The unspoken Siberian tiger in this room is a Russian unconditional. Kiev must officially pledge that Ukraine will not join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. And we all know, since the Khaganate of Nulands was installed, this was always about the Pentagon-led expansion of NATO.

Putin's "carrot" to Obama is something that he also told him on the phone: the future of Transnistria in Moldova, on Ukraine's south-west border, should be solved by talks in a 5+2 format; Moldova, Transnistria, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Russia and Ukraine, with the European Union and US as observers. Once again, no "invasion" involved.

Glaring in all this is an already immovable fact - Crimea joining the Russian Federation. And there's no turning back, whatever the US, the EU and Kiev may spin.

But that poses an ulterior problem. Putin's rationale to move on Crimea - after Russian intelligence uncovered a plot to replicate in Simferopol the coup in Kiev - was that Crimea's autonomy was not enough to protect it from the regime changers. The same could be argued later about ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in eastern and southern Ukraine. So the autonomy conditions - and the constitutional reform - would have to be ironclad. They probably won't.

Still, the stark fact is that no one gives a damn about "the Ukrainian people", be it the US, the EU or the International Monetary Fund (Russia at least cares for Russians in Ukraine). Another even more sensitive ulterior problem, assuming Washington and Moscow reach a deal, is how far can you trust the "word" of the United States government. Russia has first-hand experience on the matter, as in Bush father promising Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not expand across eastern Europe. It did - like a blob in a cheap horror flick.

We should never forget the Big Picture; as with the NSA Orwellian-panopticon complex, this is most of all about the application of the Pentagon's Full Spectrum Dominance doctrine, which implies encirclement of Russia (via NATO), coupled with the pivot-style encirclement of China. And the overarching logic remains the same; this is The Empire of Chaos in action.