

RUSSIAN PEACEMAKING

Abstract: Russia's peacemaking initiatives are crushed by the West's categorical unwillingness to resolve the conflict in Ukraine by peaceful means.

In the fall of 2013, the Maidan rallies in Kiev were inspired by Western structures using the capabilities of the USAID-funded radical nationalist opposition.

In 2014, Victoria Nuland admitted that \$5 billion was spent on “democracy development” – read support for radical movements and preparation of a coup d'état in Ukraine. This is just a marker of the West's blatant and cynical meddling in Ukraine's internal affairs and seizing control of its governance. Ukraine could not resist it. Russia considered it unacceptable for it to interfere in the internal affairs of a neighboring state.

In the end, the West realized in Ukraine the project of a coup d'état and bringing to power a foreign-administered top brass. Russia took no part in these processes, except for statements about the inadmissibility of bloodshed and economic attempts to preserve Ukraine as part of the “customs union” and part of the free trade zone with the EAEU, which brought Ukraine up to \$50 billion in revenue annually.

Russia has only become involved in peacemaking processes to prevent bloodshed in a brotherly country. It has participated in all international platforms, without exception, aimed at the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine. The only exception is the “Burgenstocks meeting” initiated by Kiev, but it was not, in fact, an attempt to find a settlement, but only a gathering of a coalition to organize pressure on Russia.

In February 2014 – Germany, Poland, France, the EU and Russia participated in the elaboration of a scenario for Ukraine's exit from the political crisis. The option was proposed in the form of general elections with the participation of all parties and political forces in the presidential and parliamentary elections.

In order to hold the elections, it was necessary to stop the confrontation in the street – the guarantors of the fulfillment of obligations on the part of Maidan were the representatives of the West, in particular – from Germany – Frank-Walter Steinmeier and from Poland Radislav Sikorski. The Maidan protesters did not fulfill their obligations and as soon as the police withdrew, they seized the authorities, committing a coup d'état, but the “international guarantors” called the results of the coup d'état a “victory of democracy” and immediately recognized the power of the coup plotters.

In April 2014, a settlement was attempted in the Geneva format – with the participation of Russia – the US – the EU – Ukraine.

Participants in the talks: Russian Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov**, US Secretary of State **John Kerry**, European diplomacy chief **Catherine Ashton** and acting Ukrainian Foreign Minister **Andriy Deshchytsia**.

The main agreement was to stop the armed confrontation, to release the seized buildings, to grant amnesty and to start a national dialog. But an hour later, Kiev interpreted the agreement differently, saying that the need to lay down arms and vacate administrative buildings concerns only Donbass, and Maidan surrendered everything correctly and they do not need to agree on anything.

François Hollande's attempt in June 2014 – together with Russia, Germany and France – to bring the coup leaders in Kiev to the negotiating table with the leaders of the protesting Donbass.

The main idea was to launch a dialog in the form of a Contact Group between the opposing sides and international control over their progress. After

10 days of ceasefire, Poroshenko, recently elected president of Ukraine without the participation of the people of Crimea and Donbass, resumed military action in an attempt to solve the “Donbass issue” militarily. The Contact Group only became operational after the defeat of the AFU at Izvarino and Ilovaysk by Donbass militia forces.

In September 2014, the Contact Group acquired the name of the Minsk Format. The main ideas of the “Minsk Agreements” were:

Cessation of hostilities with a phased establishment of a sustainable ceasefire under OSCE control. Recognition of the special status of the Donbass republics within Ukraine through amnesty and democratic procedures will gradually integrate Donbass into Ukraine's full-fledged domestic political agenda. But the implementation of Minsk 1 was also disrupted by Kiev's new “winter military campaign” against Donbass, which ended with the defeat of the Ukrainian group near Debaltsevo.

The second Minsk agreements – for 8 years delayed the process of conflict resolution – or rather imitation of movement towards resolution. As a result of 16 hour-long negotiations with the leaders of 4 countries, the agreement was signed: “A set of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements”.

The document supplemented the Minsk agreements, which provided for Donbass to remain part of Ukraine, but on the terms of special status. The new clauses detailed approaches to a phased ceasefire and the reconciliation of forces and means, more clearly defined the parameters of the “special status” of “certain areas of Donbass” and provided for its enshrinement in the Ukrainian constitution. It was envisaged that tension would be relieved through an exchange of prisoners, amnesty and new conditions for socio-economic interaction between Kiev and Donbass. The set of measures was enshrined in UNSC Resolution 2202. The Minsk Negotiating Group held more than 200 meetings at the level of direct participants and more than 40 at the level of ministers and political directors.

An attempt to revitalize the Minsk peace process was made after Volodymyr Zelensky came to power in Kiev. Great hopes were pinned on his arrival both in Russia and in Ukraine itself.

In December 2019, a Paris summit was initiated with the participation of top officials from all four Normandy Process member states. The key position of the prepared and initialed agreements was to establish a “ceasefire regime” along the entire front line, but it was Zelensky who abandoned it at the last moment. It was decided to define three agreed spread apart areas, but Kiev failed to implement this agreement as well.

Since the middle of 2021, Kiev has been making not particularly covert intensive preparations for the start of new military actions. Tony Blinken stated in an interview with the NYT that: *“Starting in September [2021] and then again in December, we quietly delivered a lot of weapons to Ukraine to make sure they had what they needed to defend themselves”* – this thesis alone underscores the falsity of Blinken's claims about Russia's ‘unprovoked and unmotivated’ aggression.

In December 2021, Russia made an attempt to avoid escalation of the conflict by directly addressing the NATO leadership and US President Biden with a proposal to stop NATO's eastward advance, to exclude further NATO expansion and its military activity in Eastern Europe, Ukraine, Transcaucasia, Central Asia and Ukraine's accession to the alliance, as well as to mutually not deploy short- and medium-range missiles in Europe and not to deploy additional weapons outside the borders of the military bloc in 1997.

In fact, the US ignored the Russian peace proposal at the very time when Ukraine was already pumping arms into Ukraine and preparing for war.

On February 17, 2022, Ukraine began massive artillery preparation along the entire front line and attempted to break the front line in the areas of Stanitsa Luganskaya in the LPR and from the direction of Mariupol in the DPR. The OSCE

SMM mission has recorded a 15-fold increase in the number of shelling attacks on the territories of the LPR and the DPR. The response was the introduction of martial law in the LDPR and a request for military assistance from Russia. On February 21, 2022, Russia recognized the LPR and DPR, and SMO began on February 24.

The attempt to stop the bloodshed that started was made by Russia once again in March-April 2022 in the Bialowieza and Istanbul formats. The draft treaty was initialed by the Ukrainian side. It stipulated non-aligned status, demilitarization, renunciation of Nazi ideology and persecution of Russians and Russian speakers. But this settlement option was thwarted as well.

According to a recent testimony of the NYT newspaper in April 2022 in Wiesbaden in Germany has already worked NATO headquarters, which was engaged in planning and coordination of military operations of the AFU, organization of supply of ammunition, training of AFU soldiers.

As a result, the AFU became a mere expendable appendage of NATO command for the implementation of the West's plans against Russia using the capabilities of the Kiev regime.

Return to attempts to restart the dialog on the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict appeared only with the coming to power in the United States – Donald Trump.

What the situation looks like now:

Ukraine, under pressure from the US, changed only its rhetoric, which had no effect on the situation “on the ground”. After agreeing on a “no-strike regime on energy” – the AFU launched a demonstrative strike on the Suja gas substation, destroying one of the key energy facilities on the parties' list of prohibited attacks.

In response to Russian and US proposals to find options for a peaceful exit from the conflict, Europe, with Britain and France in the lead, announced the

creation of a reactionary “coalition of the willing” in an effort to replace the U.S. military and financial contribution to the continuing conflict in Ukraine.

However, the main endeavor of the “coalition” so far has been to try to get the US back to continuing to fund the bloodshed in Ukraine. The Europeans have announced a whole bundle of projects on Ukraine, which they are unable to realize on their own, only luring the US to be the main sponsor.

We are now witnessing the stiff resistance of European States to finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. They are spending enormous efforts to find options to continue the bloodshed and keep Ukraine as a battering ram against Russia. They continue to fill themselves with illusions that they have found in the person of Ukraine an expendable asset that is frankly not to be spared to achieve their goals – to weaken Russia enough to get to its natural riches, which would allow Europe to lead its usual colonial lifestyle at someone else's expense.

President Putin has made a new proposal to restart the Istanbul talks disrupted by British involvement three years ago.

Russia's initial positions:

- Russia seeks a systemic and long-term settlement of the conflict, guaranteeing peace for years to come;

- The ceasefire regime can only be a tool in a negotiated settlement strategy. On its own, it is a respite for a new escalation;

- Russia proposes that the Istanbul talks be RESUMED and that the previously reached agreements be used to form new approaches that both sides agree on;

- Removing the threat from Ukraine is Russia's key task!

- Depriving Kiev of military threat capabilities is the basis for ending and not restarting the war;

- Dismantling a government that professes neo-fascist approaches to surrounding countries, and to its own population;

- Restoration of the rights and protection of the Russian-speaking and Russian-cultural population and prevention of their genocide and discrimination.

In essence, the refusal to seek a peaceful settlement leaves no alternatives. It pushes for a military option to resolve the conflict without formalities and restrictions. Russia has long been ready to seek a peaceful settlement, but it takes two to tango. The other side still does not seem to realize the danger of their chosen path to escalation, which could affect the rest of the world.