

Incident near Kerch Strait as a sign of Russia's weakening in Ukrainian crisis

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At Wednesday November 28th 2018, Ukrainian president P. Poroshenko signed law about "State of martial law in Ukraine". State of martial law introduced in 10 regions of Ukraine for 30 days till December 26. **Source:** <https://zn.ua/UKRAINE>

As a result at November 28th Ukraine introduced "State of martial law in Ukraine" in 10 regions till December 26.

At Sunday November 25 2018, Russian border service detained 3 Ukrainian military ships near Kerch Strait using weapons. Russian authorities announced that they detained 24 people, while 3 or 6 of whom were wounded.

EU and US reaction as usual was concentrated on "expressing concern" and stock calls for de-escalation and being restraint.

However, Germany and France refused the proposal to impose more sanctions on Russia. The stand of leading European countries is well known. For last 4.5 years, France and Germany become tired from economical and political burdens of this conflict and they insist on quick solution or freezing the conflict at least.

In the same time, US called Europe to impose extra sanctions on Russia for its aggression against Ukraine in Azov Sea. This was stated by Kurt Volker U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine.

US President Trump on November 29th canceled his meeting with Russian President Putin two days before they were scheduled to sit down on the sidelines of the G20 summit

As for reasons of this escalation, there are a lot of versions that are advanced: from "Putin's attempts to wage large scale war against Ukraine" to such inept ones as "Ukrainian president Poroshenko initiated this provocation to shift coming presidential elections in Ukraine"

Indeed, this incident is direct and natural consequence of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as it was stated by France representative during UN Security Council seat at November 26th.

Without going into details, it is important to stress on the following fact:

This incident is practically first armed conflict between Russian and Ukrainian soldiers that was confirmed by Russia. For last 4 years, Russians operated via so called little green men or regular soldiers who infiltrated to Ukraine during "vacation and by own initiative".

It's also worth mentioning that it is the first time when state of martial law was introduced by Ukraine during 4 year conflict with Russia despite the fact that escalation and treat of direct Russian intervention were much more bigger before.

Ukraine feared to provoke Russia's intervention and sought to stabilize situation at eastern Ukraine. And now this stand changed to activity in Black and Azov seas in immediate vicinity to Crimea which is considered by Russia as its territories.

Also in the last two years, Russian officials changed former bravado to appeals to "European partners" to exert pressure on Ukraine and force its leadership to sit around bargaining table in the shade of Minsk agreements.

All of the mentioned above are the signs of Russia's weak stand in confrontation with Ukraine. In last two years, Ukraine and its European allies have strategic initiative in Ukrainian crisis and the last incident in Azov sea is natural manifestations of this fact.

As for consequences of that incident with big probability, we can suppose the following:

US will use this incident to impose more sanction pressure and EU may join it with some stipulation. Moreover, it will be used by US to increase military aid to Ukrainian army.

In order to strengthen international pressure and weaken Russia, Moscow will be forcedly involved in new international law violation episodes. For instance, after the last incident near Kerch strait, Russia is charged with violating UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, and Ukraine will submit actions to international courts.

Russia will be leaded by other states in this confrontations since it is easily provoked, has no strategic thinking and unable to use political maneuvers while trying to solve all problems with military means. From the beginning of Ukrainian crisis, Russia prefers saber-rattling instead of political means which fully fits the following saying of Russian tsar Alexander III: "In the whole world Russia has only two allies which are its army and fleet".

Therefore economic and political loop will be tightened on the neck of the Russian leadership. With a glance of pathological inability to conduct political maneuvers, Russia has last influential option – large scale intervention to Ukraine. But Russia did not intervene in 2014 when conditions were much more better than now, so it is not expected today. And if Russia will decide to intervene, yet it will only bring nearer its defeat in this crisis.

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