

A winter break or an attack on Crimea - under what scenario will the war in Ukraine continue after the De-occupation of Kherson?

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As is known, the liberation of Kherson has already been assessed as a great military and an important political and psychological victory for Ukraine. Now it is possible to analyze what new opportunities this gives to the Ukrainian army and how things will develop. At the same time, the Russian forces launched a massive offensive in the Donetsk region, and are carrying out more intensive missile attacks against the critical infrastructure of Ukraine, as a result of which, first of all, the civilian population of the country is harmed and the victims are increasing more and more. As a result of the missile strikes, as is known, the missiles reached the territory of Poland. With all of the above, the Russians want to somehow cover up the Kherson disaster. At the same time, it is worth noting the fact that the Russian army is insufficiently equipped and not ready for the winter war. This is the main reason why the Russians are asking for negotiations. According to them, depending on the situation on the front, the events may develop in two scenarios - the parties take the so-called winter break, or the armed forces of Ukraine develop an offensive to the south - first in the direction of Melitopol and Mariupol, and then in the direction of Crimea.

The first possible scenario is a winter break. According to this scenario, both sides will refrain from ground operations as much as possible and will accumulate forces for active spring combat operations. This pause may last up to 6 months, during which both sides will mainly launch a missile and air strikes on various military and infrastructure facilities. Rain and snow will significantly complicate large-scale offensive operations, so it is expected that "both sides will

exchange artillery fire" during this period. Most likely, the Russians intend to continue bombing Ukraine's civilian infrastructure with missiles and Iranian drones. The Russian forces, which are demoralized and have poorly prepared positions, will try to develop the events in this way.

We can also assume that winter will generally be needed by both sides to build up their forces, although this does not mean that there will not be attacks in certain directions. The capture of Kherson is important from a psychological, moral, and political point of view. Russia had left it as a matter of fact, because it no longer had the potential to attack Odesa-Mykolaiv, and without it, Kherson was vulnerable. On the other hand, this allows the Ukrainians to get closer to Crimea, if they can get 300-500 km missiles for "Hymars", then they will be able to carry out strikes in Crimea. At the same time, they can create two operational directions for liberating Zaporizhzhia from this direction - west and southeast. Winter, in general, will be needed on both sides. Ukraine also needs to collect some reserves, because they spent a lot of resources on Kherson. In addition to this, it is necessary to organize control over Kherson - cleaning, detention, and fortification.



Source: Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 13 November)

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At the same time, to the question of which winter conditions are more beneficial for whom, it should be noted that the Ukrainians have 9 years of experience in winter fighting, while Russia does not have this. The winter period has positive and negative factors - camouflage is less

possible, and there are more foggy and cloudy days, which makes reconnaissance difficult. In terms of movement in the 21st century, there are unlikely to be any major disruptions to tracked machinery, but it is still expected that both sides will take some sort of pause, but this does not mean that there will not be clashes in certain directions. At the current stage, the Russians are attacking the city of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, and the Ukrainians are continuing to liberate the Lugansk region. As for the second possible scenario - an attack towards Crimea, in this direction the Ukrainians have to cross the Dnieper, which is not so easy, because they have to cross the Kakhovka bridge to start an attack on Crimea, and the Russians know this. Crimea is still a hundred kilometers away, so reaching the peninsula requires considerable effort. As for Melitopol and Mariupol, the approach of the Ukrainian army to these two settlements seems more realistic, especially since the right bank of the Dnieper is controlled by the Ukrainians. It is possible, but the attack on Mariupol does not mean a large-scale operational counter-strike, it will be in a certain separate direction.

According to another version, the winter break should suit Russia more, because the occupiers will be able to redraw their strategic reserves. This pause will also allow the command of the Russians to form new types of units and send them to the front, which will delay a possible attack of the Ukrainian armed forces towards Crimea. The capture of Kherson has geostrategic importance, and Mariupol may be more important for Ukraine at this stage because it allows Kyiv to regain access to the Sea of Azov. Mariupol is the second largest city after the Donetsk region, and naturally, the return of the post-industrial city will bring a serious turning point in the course of the war. With this, the Ukrainians will be able to block the Russian forces in Crimea, as well as put the Black Sea Fleet under attack and limit their actions.

Another point is that the Ukrainians are likely to start a new operation to free Kakhovka. There is a hydroelectric power station and a dam here, which is a key location. After its capture, the road in the direction of Mariupol may be opened, which will limit the actions of the Russian forces in the Donetsk region. The main thing now for the Ukrainians is to suppress the rocket-artillery points on the left bank of the Dnieper, so that, if given the opportunity, they can cross the Dnieper and occupy the left bank and liberate the district as a whole. In this case, it will be more possible that the battles will take place in the areas of Melitopol, Novaya Kakhovka, and Mariupol.

As for Donbas, the direction of Donetsk is important for the Russians because if they could and the Ukrainian so-called If they broke the Mannerheim line, went in the direction of Sloviansk-Kramatorsk, and occupied it completely, then the Ukrainians will face difficulties. The Ukrainians are trying their best to protect the Donetsk region and not to allow the defense line to be breached.

In what case will Ukraine be considered the winner and how far will the West follow Kyiv?

According to official Kyiv, the formula for Ukraine's victory is the restoration of territorial integrity - as President Zelensky has repeatedly noted - "the Ukrainian flag must return to Crimea, and only then will the world feel that there is no longer a war". Most likely, the West will stand by Ukraine until the end, and actually, it depends on the position of Ukraine itself and the results of the battles. At the current stage, 1,886 settlements have been unoccupied in Ukraine, and the country's armed forces have to liberate another two thousand towns and villages. "It may be dark in our streets. Maybe it's cold in our houses. But they could not change the most important thing. We must not give up. Because Ukrainians are not used to giving up, because they have dignity and therefore freedom! This remains unchanged. We will overcome everything, we will endure, we will survive, we will win!" - said the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky".

Earlier, Zelensky said that Ukraine has a formula for peace for Ukraine, Europe, and the whole world: Ukraine's proposals are radiation, nuclear, food, and energy security, the release of all bullets and deportees, implementation of the UN Charter and restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and world order, withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine and cessation of hostilities, restoration of justice, prevention of ecocide, non-escalation and fixation of the end of the war. Earlier, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Valery Zaluzhny, said that negotiations with Russia are acceptable only if the condition is Russia's withdrawal from all occupied territories of Ukraine. The US Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, said that "the US is ready to support Ukraine as long as necessary. He said the US is focused on supporting Ukraine, and Ukraine is focused on making sure it does everything it can to regain every inch of its sovereign territory. Austin also believes that Ukraine will be ready to fight in the winter months and will be in a much better position than its opponent.