



# PEACE AND STABILISATION STRATEGIES

WEEKLY MONITORING

## Ceasefire in Syria after the Kerry-Lavrov talks

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday, a ceasefire negotiated in Geneva by the US and Russia came into effect. The truce was negotiated to last 7 days and is expected to enable humanitarian aid access into areas with heavy fighting. No serious incidents or violations were reported after implementation of the truce. However, fighting in Aleppo and Idlib resulted in civilian casualties in the days leading up to the truce.

Russia and the US also agreed to undertake joint operations against terrorists. However, the cessation of hostilities does not include Islamic State militants and Al-Qaeda-affiliated rebels. The deal was accepted by the Syrian government and its allies. Opposition had objections though, because of the lack of a clear definition of “terrorists” to be targeted by Russians and regime and the American coalition. Some opposition groups, mainly jihadist groups, completely rejected the deal, while groups linked to Al-Qaeda are the strongest force supporting the anti-Assad rebellion. The truce was also supported by Syrian Kurds, who control areas in the north of the country.

Source: Al Jazeera, AFP, CBC News, ARA News

*For many the rejection of an accord by the so called “opposition” confirms the lack of possibilities for the negotiation, and even the lack of any real American influence in Syria. Nonetheless, it is crucial to also look at the problem from another perspective, though this would still not allow for a comprehensive vision of the truth either, it would allow for the interpretation of facts from a different angle. Most importantly, the rejection of an agreed-to accord, which does not include either Al Qaeda or ISIS, would confirm the real linkages between opposition groups and the aforementioned terrorist groups. As a consequence, opposition groups have to reject any initiatives leading to the final destruction of extremist groups. Another layer of that interpretation would be to understand that the so called “opposition” groups have radicalized themselves to the extent that any further agreements are beyond their interest. It is obvious that many in the opposition were in favor of Sharia law in Syria from the beginning. The declaration of a negotiation assumes an extension of Bashar al-Assad’s government, and therefore in direct conflict with opposition interests, which is seeking a power shift – not a change in the economic and social situation in Syria. In my opinion, negotiations are always better than war, and especially now with the current situation in Syria. The ongoing conflict, involving an array of internal and external powers, provides no benefits for Syrians.  
Comment: Maciej Milczanowski*



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## Separatist leaders announce ceasefire in Donbass

The beginning of unilateral ceasefire had been planned to begin by rebel leaders in eastern Ukraine on September 15. More than a year since the declaration of the Minsk Agreements, Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky, leaders from Donetsk and Lugansk, have finally made assurances of being fully committed to the agreements and confirm them as an “only solution.” This unilateral ceasefire is the first separatist initiative of this type. Concurrently, President Poroshenko said that there is “no alternative” to decentralization and that he expects the Parliament to discuss constitutional amendments enabling more autonomy to regions in Ukraine.

The day before this announcement, at least 3 Ukrainian soldiers and 3 rebels died in fighting. This and other similar incidents in the last few weeks are further violations of Minsk peace truce. In order to arrange for new conflict resolution initiatives, President Poroshenko met with foreign ministers from the UK and Poland and with diplomats from Germany and France.

Source: Associated Press, Stratfor.com

*Much has been written about the violations toward civilians committed by both parts of the conflict, and with so much digitalization in our current times it is nearly impossible to verify all information or separate truth from propaganda. However, some criteria could be used to evaluate the intentions of the two sides. It seems incredible that the United Nation have not been involved constructively in Syria so far. The UN was established as a mechanism to prevent political gain from conflict by having UN military and humanitarian organizations exert pressure on those at the highest levels in politics to avoid further escalation. This is a way to limit and even eliminate the creation of more victims, and simultaneously provides favorable conditions for future negotiations and the development of bilateral relations between countries or parties. UN missions have historically been successful and have been able to bring about these pressures and contain the human casualties of war. However, in order for the UN to provide stabilization, both parties of the conflict must express their good will, because the UN is not intended as a force to enforce peace, but as a force to ensure peace prevails. However, it is worth highlighting, who is calling for the deployment of international peace forces in this conflict and who opposes that idea, stating that blue helmets represent just one country and thereby perceived as supporting an official side of the conflict. Is that not hypocrisy? No matter who is responsible for the worsening of the civilian situation in eastern Ukraine, a more significant question is who gains when conflict escalates.*

*Comment: Maciej Milczanowski*



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## NATO Secretary General visits Turkey

NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, arrived in Ankara for the first time since the unsuccessful military coup in Turkey in July. The two-day visit began on Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>. The visit aimed to be a sign of support and an expression of solidarity with Turkey in the context of recent coup. Additionally, the current situation in Syria was also discussed since Turkey has become a crucial player after launching an operation against jihadists. It was emphasized however, that the main reason for the visit was to assure Turkey and the international community that NATO fully supports the democratically elected government in Ankara and condemns its attackers.

Stoltenberg's visit is closely linked to the three-weeks lasting Turkish operation in Syria. Further discussion on the possible support the alliance can provide to Turkey is also expected. Another hot topic will be the Turkish proposal of establishing a no-fly zone inside Syria; however, the US has not endorsed Turkish government demands yet.

Source: NATO.int, Daily News

*Recent events in Turkey and neighboring countries have raised a wave of criticism from the international community toward the government in Ankara and even President Erdogan. Under no condition, can the Turkish policy toward the opposition, media, courts and even PKK-related Kurds be tolerated. However, in my opinion, any demands to remove Turkey remove NATO or any eventual attempts at international isolation, will not affect internal Turkish politics in positive way; to the contrary, it could push Erdogan toward a commitment with other great powers on the geopolitical "grand chessboard". And this would lead to serious and negative consequences for Europe, the US and, as I believe, for Turkey as well. In my opinion, attempts to overthrow dictators are not an adequate measure for many reasons, and this applies to Erdogan as well. His AKP has strong social support, and that should be taken into consideration. Negotiations with guarantees to shift the political direction could have better results in the long term, more so than any radical actions, the effects of which would be irreversible. This is assuming that it would not be an attempts as naïve as the immigration agreement between President Erdogan and Chancellor Merkel.*

*Comment: Maciej Milczanowski*

## Forces loyal to General Khalif Haftar attack oil ports in Libya

The Libyan National Army (LNA), forces loyal to eastern commander Khalif Haftar, has launched an attack on Libyan oil ports and taken control of terminals. Three ports have been attacked: Zueitina, Ras Lanuf and Es Sider, all to the east of Sirte and near the city of Ajdabyiya, where clashes were ongoing. Haftar's forces are mobilized in the area and expected to wage a struggle for further



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control, thus making the Petroleum Facilities Guards' (PFG) statement that the ports would be re-opened less convincing.

The ports have been closed since 2014, but recently PFG reached a deal with the UN-backed government in Tripoli on the possibility of re-opening them, aiming to increase Libyan exports. Both Ras Lanuf and Es Sider were damaged previously in attacks conducted by the Islamic State, based in Sirte. The United States and five European governments condemned the attack.

Source: Al Jazeera

*Libya is entering another stage in its rocky transition. The UN and internationally-backed Government of National Unity (GNU) formally holds authority over ports in what can be called Libya's "oil belt." The forces loyal to General Haftar had their eye on seizing control over these ports for quite a while. Though formally condemned, the move would likely raise little opposition from Western countries, which have always held silent but favorable views of the General as a potential "strongman" to take control over Libyan territories. As a sworn enemy of the Tripoli-based former Muslim Brotherhood controlled GNA (General National Assembly), the General has also been backed by Egypt and Saudi Arabia. His influence in the coming months is likely to rise.*

*Comment: Marcin Bużański*

## **Kurdish attack in Turkish province of Van**

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, the PKK conducted an attack in the Turkish province of Van. At least 50 people were wounded in a car bomb, including four policemen. The target of the attack was a local police headquarters. The incident coincided with the first day of Islamic Eid al-Adha holiday, one of the most significant religious celebrations in Islam. The AKP local headquarters and hotel located near the place where attack occurred were also damaged.

Security forces announced that PKK militants were responsible for the attack. The attack was condemned by the AKP ruling party and by the opposition parties. Deputy Prime Minister, Nurettin Canlikli, stated that in that attack the PKK had turned to directly targeting civilians.

Source: Daily News

*The situation in eastern Turkey appears to be more and more unstable. However, it is worth remembering that a deal between Ankara and the leader of Turkish Kurds imprisoned in Turkey, Abdullah Ocalan, reached several years ago resulted in the mitigation of the situation in Turkey. After the low electoral results of the AKP a year ago, Ankara calculated that conflict with PKK would give*



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*the party a full victory in next election, and that calculation turned out to be right. Unfortunately, once the flame of radicalization has begun to burn, it continues to fuel itself afterwards, and is upheld by internal and external powers. **This is a warning for any politician seeking benefits in an ongoing conflict.** Erdogan has doubtlessly enhanced his position, but on the other hand he has destabilized the situation in Turkey by undermining the fundamentals of Turkey's potential economic success. When the power of AKP grows, Turkey will lose economically as a result of the strain of its relationship with the West. Replacing the West with Russia does not seem beneficial for Turkey and the AKP, while Moscow in fact has a little to offer besides military capabilities and gas.*

*Comment: Maciej Milczanowski*

## **UK is to deploy extra troop to South Sudan and Somalia**

On September 8, Michael Fallon, British Secretary of Defense, stated that the United Kingdom will deploy additional forces to support the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and UN-supported African Union mission in Somalia (AMISOM). One hundred additional troops will be deployed to South Sudan and 40 to Somalia. Moreover, Somalia will receive £200 million in military support.

According to Fallon's statement, such a large scale of deployment of peacekeeping troops is strongly related to British global commitments. As the British defense budget rises, the UK perceives its contribution as an effort to tackle the instability that leads to mass migration and terrorism.

Source: Africa News

*This declaration was been made when London was hosting the global summit on peacekeeping operations, a follow-up to the summit held by the Obama administration on the outskirts of last year's General Assembly in New York. The UK has been consistent in its support for the Somali Government, and recent failures by the UN mission in South Sudan have increased pressure for rapidly fulfilling additional commitments approved in recent resolutions by the Security Council. Additionally, the UK, as the host of the Summit, wanted to show both its global outreach as well as a certain degree of reliability (especially to European partners), after being so strongly tarnished by the Brexit vote.*

*Comment: Marcin Bużański*



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## Record military aid deal between US and Israel

The United States and Israel have agreed to the biggest US military aid deal in history. According to the new arrangement, Israel will get at least \$3.8 billion of aid annually, resulting in an overall amount of \$38 billion. The current pact expires in 2018. The new deal calls for Israel not to call Congress for any funds beyond those guaranteed in a new pact and suspending a former agreement allowing Israel to spend US aid on its own military industry and not on American weapons.

The deal was brokered despite shaky relations between Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Obama was accused by Israel of insufficient assistance for the country, so the new arrangement will help 'recover' his legacy in Israeli as well as provide Netanyahu with the assurance of a favorable deal struck before a change of power in the US and an uncertain future.

Source: Reuters, Jerusalem Post

*Israel's influence in the US, despite tensions between the leaders of the two countries, remains formidable. Considering the stances of both candidates in the US elections, this influence is nearly guaranteed to continue, if not grow. The scale of the deal is also a clear indication of where the strategic outpost in the Middle East for the US is. Interestingly, in the tragic quagmire of the Syria and Iraq conflicts, Israel at the border of all the fighting, has remained quiet – interfering only silently and increasingly playing all sides against each other. This is clearly a well-crafted game of realpolitik, additionally taking attention away from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.*

*Comment: Marcin Bużański*

## Increased victims of clashes in Kashmir: India sends more troops

Despite the imposition of a curfew, anti-India protests in Kashmir continue. On September 13, two people died and more than 20 were wounded in an escalation of clashes between protesters and security forces. The Police have stated that Indian authorities are using helicopters and drones to control the area in which a new bout of violence was unleashed recently. 76 people have been killed and over 7,000 wounded since the clashes escalated in July. It is the worst violence in six years over a disputed territory.

Meanwhile, India launched an operation called "Calm Down." Nearly 4,000 additional troops will be deployed due to the Kashmir situation. Following instructions, minimum force will be used and only when deemed necessary. The aim of the mission is to rid the region of militants.

Source: The Times of India, Reuters



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## **Nigerian Army claims successes in fighting rebel groups in the Niger Delta Region**

Launched in last month, operation code-named 'Crocodile Smile' conducted by the Nigerian Army against rebels groups in the Niger Delta region, has been considered successful. According to the Army's estimation, 74 illegal refineries and trafficking camps operating in oil production, were destroyed. The operation was launched to rid the region of militants responsible for the attacks on oil installations in this oil-rich region.

Earlier this week, the Army announced that saboteurs linked to rebel groups were arrested, among them the suspected leader of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), currently one of the most active rebel groups in the Niger Delta. Four military officers died when their boat capsized during the operation. It is unknown whether that was caused by a rebel attack. Simultaneously, the NDA announced that since the beginning of the operation at least 20 soldiers have been killed. That number was not been confirmed by official authorities.

Source: Africa News, Daily Trust

## **Bolivia and Russia sign military-technical cooperation agreement**

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, Bolivia and Russia signed an agreement on military and technical cooperation that aims to support the improvement of the capabilities of the Bolivian Armed Forces. The agreement includes issues related to the sale of military equipment and technology transfer from Russia to its South American counterpart. Additionally, Russia will provide Bolivia with military trainings. These trainings include military cadre trainings and bilateral work on the modernization of military doctrines. As agreed, Bolivian officials will travel to Russia to be trained in military academies and institutions. The Bolivian Minister of Defense stated that this cooperation is based on principles from the UN Charter and on the basis of international law norms and obligations as well as national laws.

Source: Prensa Latina

## **Duterte calls for American Special Forces troops to withdraw from southern Philippines**

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines called for the withdrawal of American Special Forces troops from the islands located in southern part of his country. The reason he gave is the complications the American presence has caused in waging an offensive against Islamic militants active in the area. Americans are, as Duterte said, valuable targets of attack for Abu Sayyaf, a group linked to Islamic State.



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The US Department of State stated that an official communication to authorities in Manila has been sent, and the US is committed to its former alliance with the country. Recently, President Obama cancelled a meeting with Duterte, expected to take place during last week's ASEAN summit, after Duterte insulted him in the press. Bilateral relations between two countries has been rough due to Duterte's rhetoric.

Source: Reuters

## **Chinese-Russian joint exercises in the South China Sea**

Chinese and Russian naval forces began joint exercises in the South China Sea on September 12<sup>th</sup>, providing another incentive for the rise of tensions in the contested area. Exercises are expected to last eight days, and the spokesman for the Chinese naval forces stated that in addition to naval forces, other military equipment would take part in the activities, including ships, submarines, planes and helicopters. As reported by Chinese media, Russia sent its best vessels to participate in exercises.

The ongoing exercises are not without precedent in bilateral Chinese-Russian relations. Previously, similar exercises took place in the Japan Sea. This year's event is significant in the context of disputes over the South China Sea and The Hague's ruling against China's claims in the region.

Source: CNN

## **Army in Mozambique destroys rebel base in the district of Morrumbala**

On September 12<sup>th</sup> the Mozambican Army informed that the base controlled by the Renamo rebel group in the Morrumbala District had been destroyed. The base was used to launch attacks on trucks transporting goods and therefore remained a significant target for rebels. Some of the stolen goods were retaken by Police Forces.

Renamo, which had previously been engaged in a 16 year-long civil war that ended in 1992, rejected the elections results in 2014 in which the Frelimo party claimed to win. The party has remained in power since independence. Last month, fighting between Renamo and the Mozambican Army escalated and left several people dead according to unconfirmed reports.

Source: Africa News

## **Rebel and paramilitary groups in Colombia expand into former FARC territories**

Rebel and paramilitary groups in Colombia intensify their expansion into formerly FARC-controlled territories. This activity is connected to demobilization and disarmament process of the FARC being negotiated in peace talks with the Colombian government. The final agreement is expected to be signed in late September. According to media releases, the ELN guerrilla group has been making the greatest territorial expansions despite the fact that the ELN is currently engaged in preliminary peace



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talks with the President Santos Administration. Meanwhile, in the southeast part of the country, a paramilitary group called Los Urabeños has nearly doubled its territory.

Territorial expansion is not just geographic, it has an economic dimension as well. FARC militants charged “taxes” from civilians in those territories they held, and currently it is believed that the ELN charging the same taxes in those territories.

Source: Colombia Reports

## **Civilians in Yemen dead after Suadi-led coalition attack**

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, the Saudi-led Arab Coalition carried out an attack in Beit Saadan near the capital city of Yemen, Sana. The attack hit while workers were drilling a water well. At least 30 civilians were left dead in the attack, including children. The representatives of the Coalition stated that the intended targets were Houthi’s facilities in region. Yemeni media reported that over one hundred people were wounded in the attack. The incident took place on the eve of the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha).

It is estimated that since the Coalition launched its operation against Houthis in March 2015, over 10,000 civilians have been killed or wounded. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Jamie McGoldrick, stated that the victims were civilians and he is deeply disturbed by the reports from Yemen.

Source: BBN News, ABNA News Agency

## **The most powerful nuclear test so far by North Korea**

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, a 10 kiloton-strong nuclear warhead was detonated in North Korea, the most powerful nuclear test by the regime to date. This warhead, which could potentially be mounted on a ballistic missile, has caused a 5.3-magnitude earthquake. It is already the fifth nuclear test in North Korea and was condemned by world leaders and outraged neighboring South Korea, which justly feels endangered by the North Korean nuclear programme. The UN Security Council, President Obama, as well as Japanese and South Korean leaders, have assured the public of taking the appropriate steps against the North Korea’s activities.

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, two American B-1B strategic bombers took off from a base in Guam and flew over the Korean peninsula, in assistance of Japanese aircraft, as a show of strength and solidarity between the US and its Far East allies. North Korea then threatened a “final destruction.” Russia and China are reluctant to support current measures against the North Korean regime, and are strongly against a planned anti-missile system, which according to a deal between US and South Korea, is to be deployed in South Korea.

Source: CNN, Reuters