



ASIA



A second month in the siege of Mosul

After initial successes, an Iraqi Army and allies-led offensive has eased down. Entry of military forces into Mosul has started up fighting in highly urbanized locations and intensified resistance by fighters of the so-called Islamic State. The Iraqi military and Kurdish Peshmerga, supported by the American coalition, are in constant danger of sniper fire and suicide vehicles. Terrorists are also using civilians as a “human shields.” Concurrently, the Shia-dominated Popular Mobilization Forces have reached Tal Afar, a jihadi bastion near Mosul, cutting off the main road into Syria.

As the Army advances on its offensive, it is coming across mass graves with victims of the so-called Islamic State. Bodies of hundreds killed are being found in places recaptured in operations. In the last month, extremists have murdered hundreds of people accused of favoring the offensive.

Source: Independent, Defence24

Commentary I

The battle for Mosul is just another political time bomb ticking in the Middle East. It could not only be the beginning of the end for ISIL, but also for the Iraqi State as we know it today. Regardless, it might also be the beginning of another civil war between Sunni and Shia, of which a secondary effect could be furthering progress for an independent Kurdish state in Iraqi territory. This could replace current war against ISIL with an anti-Kurdish war lead by Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

– Stanisław Koziej



Commentary II

Proximity of the Mosul operation was being sure, therefore the current news about it are not strange. Nevertheless, the crucial issue is the fragility within the alliance of forces conducting this offensive. There is a crucial open question: how will this Pyrrhic victory in Mosul be treated.

The most significant problem is in the difficulty in determining any facts. On the one hand, reports of ISIS atrocities are terrifying, but on the other hand, a lot of information has been provided about similar atrocities committed by Shia militias pacifying villages and towns near Mosul. It can be claimed that ISIS propaganda services are behind much of this information. Movies from the conflicts in Iraq, Syria or in Yemen (easily accessible on YouTube) are prepared with actual materials, but very often with modified dates and elements added to provide altered testimony as to who is responsible for those crimes; it is difficult to treat them as real proof. Further, there are professional film studios in Europe, as well as in the Middle East, that are the ones producing these movies. This information chaos impedes mobilization and makes it easier to intimidate Sunnis in Iraq, as well as complicating fact-checking for public opinion.

Therefore, the fact is that the offensive is slow- going and that fighting remains heavy, but it is still difficult to tell what the result will be. Unfortunately, there are strong indications that it would be just another part of a deeper conflict that continues in Iraq.

– Maciej Milczanowski

New offensive against rebels in Syria

On November 16th, Syrian government forces, backed by Russians, initiated another offensive aimed at crushing rebel resistance. Attacks in Aleppo, as well as in Idlib and Homs, have left hundreds of people dead. Renewed fighting caused another wave of refugees and was met with UN criticism, which once again condemned the violations of international humanitarian law. Regime forces have taken over huge parts of the city of Aleppo that were previously held by rebels.

Simultaneously, Turkish-backed forces of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) are continuing their advance on Islamic



State-held city of al-Bab in the province of Aleppo. The United States affirm that they are not supporting the operation. The strategically located city is contested between rebels and the Syrian Kurdish militias, which are part of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The US-backed SDF are currently conducting the “Wrath of the Euphrates” offensive on ISIS in the capital of Raqqa.

Source: Washington Post, Reuters

Commentary

While in Iraq concern has centered on how the armies of a temporary (temporary to a certain extent because Shia militias are totally dependent on Tehran) Iraqi-Kurdish-Iranian coalition, supported by the US and others, would behave, in Syria the crucial question is more about the role of superpowers. The fate of the conflict depends on Russia and the United States, as much as it does Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and arguably Israel as well.

The role of a new US president could also be of particular importance. It is not necessarily about campaign promises, because in the case of Donald Trump they are probably non-significant. The issue is about his relations with Vladimir Putin and the way he will play the “Great Chessboard” game. Any agreements at a national level, even as a consequence of a proxy war, are not to be expected in the case of Syria. These are the brute forces of geopolitics in which bargains such as “Ukraine for Syria” are pretty likely. In addition to those two “pawns,” there are still a number of different game “elements” that could be bargained with. It is Trump himself who has said that he would enter negotiations with Putin as a businessman with businessman. This “business” looks just like that. A President-elect who wants to negotiate the fate of Syria and Syrians with Putin would have to take into consideration that among bargaining “chips” there is not just Ukraine, but Moldova and Georgia as well; and possibly Latvia and Estonia too. North Korea could be an important element of pressure as well, and the central role in this game belongs to a third global player – China. The question is, will it be possible for Trump and his people not to be outplayed by Putin and his sly and tough players....

– Maciej Milczanowski

Myanmar: ethnic cleansing of Muslim minority

There is a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar. Another wave of tensions between the Burmese people and the Muslim Rohingya minority began again in November in Rakhina State. Muslims are treated as intruders from Bangladesh, and the conflict has been going on since 2012. This current exacerbation provides



proof that internal tensions are evolving into ethnic cleansing. These strong allegations were given by the United Nations (specifically the UNHCR) to the Government in Naypyidaw.

The State Army regularly commits violent acts in the villages inhabited by the Muslim majority. Houses are set on fire, rapes are common and civilians are shot, including children. The Army's brutal policy is forcing the Rohingya people to escape into Bangladesh. Spontaneous resistance is suppressed by the better equipped and trained Army. The UN estimates that in the last few weeks about 30 thousand people had to flee their homes. A year after the first free elections in a half of a century, Myanmar still cannot cleave itself from its authoritarian legacy.

Source: Al Jazeera

Commentary

The dramatic situation of the Rohingya, the Muslim minority in Myanmar (f. Burma), one of the most persecuted communities in the world, soils the image of a new, democratic State Authority. By continuing to not recognize the Rohingya as citizens, and by not showing any willingness to protect them, the Myanmar Government risks being delegitimized by the international community. A question of possible foreign intervention to save the minority could be put on the agenda in the near term. This situation is also the most visible manifestation of the destructive potential of a new Buddhist extremism that also has advocates in Thailand and is unfriendly to religious minorities, specifically Muslim minorities. It could be an important destabilizing factor in South East Asia.

– Jędrzej Czerep

Bloody attack in Pakistan

In the November 12 attack on a Sufi shrine in Pakistani Baluchistan, more than 50 people were killed, and at least one hundred wounded. During the Sufi worshipping rituals, a suicide bomber blew up himself; because of the remote location of the shrine, victims had to wait for a long time for help. ISIL has admitted to the attack. Sufi's are very often persecuted by extremists, whom accuse them of heresy. In the last months, Baluchistan has been the scene of many terrorist attacks, and Islamic radicals, as well as separatists fighting with the Pakistani Government, are active in the province.

Source: BBC, CNBC



AFRICA



Uganda: government forces clash with rebels of the self-appointed king

About 55 people are dead after fighting between the police and followers of Charles Wesley Mumbere – king of the Rwenzururu region, who attempted to create his own state and secede from Uganda. Clashes broke out in Kasese, near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mumbere's rebels assaulted the police patrol, which resulted in the deaths.

Source: News24

Commentary

The brutal actions of the Ugandan Forces against the followers of a traditional leader of the local Rwenzururu Kingdom, are connected with the latter's support for Kizza Besigye, the losing opposition candidate in the presidential elections. King Charles Wesley Mumbere has broken the custom in which traditional rulers do not interfere in the country's actual political life. Bloody retaliation indicates that the authorities did not learn from the experiences of the marginalization and persecution of the Acholi people, from which the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was borne out, a fanatical guerilla that until 2005 had been ravaging the north of the country and is still active. Currently, considering the collective repressions against the Konjo and the Amba peoples, the situation could turn into the mobilization of another generation of rebels loyal to the kingdom and into the creation of a permanent hotbed for conflict, awakening new decentralist movements in Uganda.

– Jędrzej Czerep



Ethnic cleansing in South Sudan

The US State Department is alarmed by the violence in South Sudan, where ethnically motivated hate speech, the targeting of civilians and sexual violence is becoming widespread and cannot be ignored. The worst situation has been noted in Equatoria region.

The American authorities confirmed that about 2000 houses have been destroyed in the Central Equatoria of South Sudan since September. The government has also deployed at least 4,000 irregular ethnic militia soldiers to the area.

Source: Al Jazeera

Komentarz

The political and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan has been unfolding for over three years, taking tens of thousands of lives and displacing millions. Numerous attempts to force a settlement from the outside have failed – any agreements signed seemed not to be worth the paper written on.

Recent developments point to an upcoming offensive of Salva Kir's government against the rebels, and with history of ethnic cleansing, there is a very real concern that South Sudan could be at a brink of a catastrophe, notwithstanding acts of genocide. A warning drawing comparisons to Rwanda being issued from the UN Human Rights Commission on South Sudan uses strongest language yet pointing to the risks.

The fact is that it is still falling on deaf ears – and the international community has failed to act decisively and forcefully to prevent the widespread suffering. South Sudan has become a forgotten case in comparison to Syria for instance, and the major regional powers, and the Security Council – only actors who could stop the slaughter have failed to present a viable course. The hope and enthusiasm for the world's newest state have faded – now it should become the incoming UN Secretary General's priority – or greater tragedy will unfold

– Marcin Bużański



Clashes between Haftar's forces and Islamists in Benghazi

In clashes between Libyan National Army (LNA), commanded by Khalifa Haftar, with diverse fractions dominated by Islamists, at least 20 LNA members have been killed and dozens wounded. LNA forces, which are fighting the UN-backed government in Tripoli, are looking for influence in Benghazi. On November 14th they started a new offensive against the city's rivaling groups.

Source: Reuters

SOUTH AMERICA



Venezuela: crisis continues

As the Venezuelan economy plummets further into crisis, it is not a source of popularity for president Maduro. The opposition, a majority in the parliament, is critical of the president's politics, and Maduro's political opponents want him removed from power.

The situation is further hindered by the fact that the Mercosur coalition has suspended Venezuela's member rights. The reason for this is the Venezuelan Authorities' inability to fulfill trade standards and to abide by human rights agreements. According to other Member States, Venezuela has fallen short of the obligations of the international deal. Internal tensions in the organization can also be attributed to the changes in Argentina and Brazil of leftist leaders by more conservative ones that have had more difficulty establishing effective dialogue the leftist leaning Maduro.

Source: BBC



The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is an independent, non-partisan think-tank specializing in foreign policy and international security. The Pulaski Foundation provides analyses that describe and explain international developments, identify trends in international environment, and contain possible recommendations and solutions for government decision makers and private sector managers to implement.

The Foundation concentrates its research on two subjects: transatlantic relations and Russia and the post-Soviet sphere. It focuses primarily on security, both in traditional and non-military dimensions, as well as political changes and economic trends that may have consequences for Poland and the European Union. The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is composed of over 40 experts from various fields. It publishes the Pulaski Policy Papers, the Pulaski Report, and the Pulaski Viewpoint. The Foundation also publishes "Informator Pułaskiego," a summary of upcoming conferences and seminars on international policy. The Foundation experts cooperate with media on a regular basis.

Once a year, the Casimir Pulaski Foundation gives the Knight of Freedom Award to an outstanding person who has promoted the values represented by General Casimir Pulaski: freedom, justice, and democracy. Prizewinners include: Professor Władysław Bartoszewski, Professor Norman Davies, Alaksandar Milinkiewicz, President Lech Wałęsa, President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, President Valdas Adamkus, Bernard Kouchner, and Richard Lugar.

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