



# PEACE AND STABILISATION STRATEGIES

- COMMENT

## Turkey to form military cooperation with Russia

The Foreign Minister of Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu, declared on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> August that with a warming of Turkish-Russian relations, official military, intelligence and diplomatic cooperation will be established. President Erdogan's visit to Moscow seems to be the end to a 9-month cold spell connected to the shooting down of a Russian jet.

Additionally, a trilateral summit between Russian Federation, Turkey and Azerbaijan has been proposed. One of the issues at the potential meeting could be Nagorno Karabakh. Cavusoglu labeled Karabakh as "lands occupied" by Armenia, thereby implicitly demonstrating Turkish sympathies lie with Azerbaijan. If Russia, Armenia's last remaining ally, participates in a summit of this kind, politics in the region would change significantly.

Source: Anadolu Agency

*Still only considered a potential arrangement, the Axis between Turkey and Russia remains politically attractive, especially for Russia. An alliance as such would strengthen the position of both countries in relationship to other international actors. Turkey, for example, would benefit from that partnership by strengthening its position in relation to its EU and NATO partners. However, it still remains implausible that the formal axis would be constructed soon, mainly due to other conflicting interests and the great ambitions of those authoritarian countries. What can be currently speculated is that there are longer-term attempts to take advantage of that possibility.*

*Comment: Stanislaw Koziej*

## Fighting escalates in Aleppo: civilians trapped with no access to humanitarian aid

Fighting in Aleppo continues despite Russia's declaration of a pause in air strikes and a daily ceasefire. As proposed by the UN, Russia agreed to a three-hour daily halt in air strikes to allow humanitarian convoys to reach intended communities. However, Syrian rebels and the Army clashed in southern Aleppo, including during the period of Russian pause. Humanitarian convoys were unable to enter the city.

According to recent estimations, more than 250 000 people in Aleppo are trapped in districts with no access to any humanitarian aid. The humanitarian crisis has been caused by lack of food, no access to running water and nearly or completely destroyed medical facilities. At this point in time, the UN has called for a halt to the fighting several times.

Source: Al Jazeera English, BBC News



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## Islamic State lost control over the Syrian city of Manbij: displaced people return to their homes

Thousands of displaced people returned to their homes in Manbij last weekend. Before that, the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced they were taking full control over the city. Previously, Manbij remained an ISIS stronghold in Syria.

According to the SDF, the campaign leading to the capture of the strategic city was launched two months ago. The militants left the city after a deal reached on Friday, which also secured their departure toward their stronghold near the Turkish border. Manbij has been occupied by jihadist forces since early 2014. It served as a strategic point for ISIS, allowing for the transit of foreign jihadists.

Source: Vice News, Reuters

*Are we facing the beginning of a turning point for the Syrian crisis? Much has been happening in the last days. Aleppo has again come to the attention of the world with the break of the siege by a coalition of Syrian opposition forces – this has been seen as one of the greatest victories in a long time.*

*What made it possible was an alliance between the Syrian Coalition Army and (to be frank) radical jihadist organizations. This has also been a turning point. Al-Nusra has just renounced its allegiance to Al-Kaida, - thereby hoping for some legitimacy and arms for the fight against both Assad and Daesh. Western countries are cautious in their response, although their weapons have been reaching these forces en-masse. What is clear is that any future political settlement will need a level of accommodation for die-hard Islamists.*

*The Russian-backed Syrian regime response was predictably brutal (including the possible use of chlorine gas), and Aleppo has reached another level of destruction, with a dire humanitarian situation for the remaining population. Negotiations are ongoing for humanitarian corridors and ceasefires – but since they remain unsuccessful – it is a sign that advances of rebel forces have been substantial.*

*Manbij – a key town because of its strategic location on the crossroads to Kobane and the border with Turkey to the North, and Raqqa and Aleppo West-East, as well as considered to hold Kurdish YPG positions by Ankara – has been liberated from Daesh. This has been another major blow to militants. However, their success has been met with much less enthusiasm by Turkey, which considers the YPG a terrorist organization. In addition, the YPG is armed by the US, and considering the post-coup attempt*



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*tensions surrounding Gulen's extradition, watch out for more buddy-making by Turkey with Iran and Russia.*

*Despite these major shifts, we are not yet at turning point. The positions of all parties still remain in stasis and ultimately deadlocked. Yet with shifts on the ground and territorial gains against ISIS, more discussions will be around a post-ISIS scenario. So look for the preparation of a Mosul offensive, because only after Mosul is freed and ISIS structures are removed from Iraq, will the real game for Syria start.*

*Comment: Marcin Bużański*

## **Italian and Sudanese chiefs of police reached an understanding on migration issues**

Chiefs of Italian and Sudanese police forces agreed to cooperate on the migration crisis. The agreement is a part of broader border cooperation between the European Union and Khartoum authorities. The official memorandum has been signed and presented in Rome.

As it stands, the agreement represents the finishing line in a series of negotiations between Italy and Sudan. This agreement reflects the broader framework of cooperation between Sudan and the EU on the migration crisis in the context of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The aim of the Fund is to tackle the roots of illegal migration. In April, Sudanese authorities received €155 million from the EU Fund to improve the migration management process.

Source: Dabanga, World Affairs Journal

## **Saudi-led Coalition will revive Operation Restoring Hope in Yemen**

Ahmed Al-Asiri, a Saudi Brigadier General and advisor to the Saudi Defense Minister stated that the Saudi-led Arab Coalition will revive its Operation Restoring Hope in Yemen. The decision was made as a result of the abrupt end to Yemeni peace talks in Kuwait.

The Operation was initially launched to improve political and peace processes in Yemen. It is assumed that the Operation would not rule out the use of force while it followed the military Operation Decisive Storm. After suspending peace talks in Kuwait, the Houthis launched operations on the Saudi borders, according to the General. Previously, the Operation was suspended when peace talks began in order to back UN activity.

Source: Al Arabiya English, Saudi Gazette



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## **Bloody anti-government protests in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia has experienced massive anti-government protests over the weekend. According to an Amnesty International statement, more than 60 people were killed and hundreds were injured during the clashes with the Ethiopian security forces. The nation-wide demonstrations, which started on Saturday in Addis Ababa and the northern part of the country, also cropped up on Sunday in the city of Bahir Dar, in northern Ethiopia. Currently, the actual number of victims is not known in that the regime shut down internet connection.

Protesters accuse the Ethiopian authority of marginalizing the northern regions of Ethiopia, which remain poor. They also demand the release of activists arrested previously. On Friday, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn banned demonstrations and authorized security forces to use any means necessary to prevent emerging protests.

Source: Africa News, Amnesty International

## **Islamic State attacks a military base for US-backed Syrian fighters**

A suicide bomber linked to Islamic State attacked a military base for US-backed Syrian fighters, namely the New Syrian Army. The attack took place near the Syrian-Iraqi border and left several dead. The official number of victims is unknown.

The New Syrian Army has been established around 18 months ago as rebel forces fight against Islamic State in eastern Syria. Diplomats and rebel sources stated that the New Syria Army is trained by the US Special Forces in camps in Jordan. The rebel base in Tanf has previously been hit twice by Russian air strikes.

Source: Reuters

## **Escalation of violence in Angola's Cabinda**

In Angola's oil-rich Cabinda, the conflict between the Angolan army and the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) separatist group escalated recently. As a consequence of the clash with the rebel group, 10 Angolan soldiers were killed and 9 others injured, as stated on Monday by FLEC. The current death toll in Cabinda has now risen to 40. The guerrilla group had warned the Chinese government that the presence of Chinese companies "constitutes a provocation."



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The separatists demand independence for the territory of Cabinda, an Angolan enclave. Cabinda still remains one of Angola’s main oil ports. FLEC has operated a low intensity guerilla war since Cabinda gained independence from Portugal in 1975 and Angolan troops took Cabinda in the same year. In August 2006, the Cabindan separatist forces declared a ceasefire.

Source: Reuters

## **Government and armed groups negotiate for an AU-backed ceasefire talk in Sudan**

On Tuesday, the Sudanese government and the opposition coalition opened a negotiation for peace talks and a permanent ceasefire. The AU-back peace processes would be preceded by the opposition’s signing on to a roadmap for ending conflict and achieving political reconciliation.

Fighting between the Government in Khartoum and opposition rebel and political groups began in the southern part of Sudan almost as soon as South Sudan declared independence. The AU Roadmap signed by the Sudanese government in May, remains the first official document signed by the opposition since regional violence began in 2011. Ongoing peace talks will hopefully lead to the achievement of a permanent ceasefire and political stabilization.

Source: Sudan Tribune, Reuters

## **American military aid delivered to Lebanese Army**

On Tuesday, the United States delivered military aid worth \$50 million to bolster the Lebanese army against jihadists operating close to the Syrian border. The shipment included 50 armored vehicles, 40 grenade launchers and over 1000 tons of ammunition.

In March, the US delivered three Huey II helicopters to Lebanon. Since 2006, military aid provided by Americans to Lebanon has exceeded \$1 billion. Lebanon remains the fifth-largest recipient of American military assistance.

Source: Military Times, Reuters

## **Russia accuses Ukraine of attacks in Crimea**

According to Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), one of its officers and one Russian soldier were killed in the last few days in Crimea. The Security Agency accuses Ukrainian Services of this attack and



calls it a destabilizing “sabotage.” In a similar manner – Vladimir Putin complains that Ukraine violates peace and adopts “terror.” Ukrainian authorities disagree with these allegations and label them as a justification for Russian aggression.

In conjunction with these incidents Putin has refused to participate in a planned meeting about the conflict in Ukraine with leaders of Ukraine, Germany and France. Since annexation in 2014, Crimea has been under Russian Federation rule, despite international rejection. At the same time, Crimea remains relatively stable.

Source: Reuters, AFP