Positive Dynamics of the Situation in Syria

Following the fierce fighting south of the SAR, where Syrian government forces, with the support of the Russian Special Forces, some units of the IRGC of Iran and several Hezbollah detachments repulsed the desperate attacks of DAISH in the Deir ez-Zor, Palmyra and Mayadin areas, with the US actually condoning this and encouraging the Kurds of the Syrian Democratic Forces to seize the oilfields, a turning point in the Syrian situation was reached.

The Russian Ministry of Defense has officially declared Mayadin liberated, although the situation there remains quite ambiguous, given the terrorist counterattacks. The direction of the attack by the militants is most likely designed to cut the Syrian "gut" stretched out along the Deir ez-Zor-Mayadin road and encircle the assault forces situated in the city district, given the fact that the desert areas west of the road lie completely beyond the control of the Syrians. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that DAISH possesses enough strength to not just besiege, but also destroy the assault contingent of the Syrians. That said, it is still in a position to create some major problems.

Despite desperate attempts at a counter-resistance, DAISH has still surrendered Raqqa to the Kurds. However, some of the DAISH militants, together with the women, children and part of the inhabitants of the city, were able to flee the city. Constant updates keep surfacing in relation to the position of Paris on Raqqa. The French have categorically refused to grant permission to withdraw armed militants from France and former French colonies. In addition, the French are demanding that all information concerning the foreign militants in Raqqa be transmitted to them to verify their involvement in the terrorist attacks in Paris. Half of the elite DAISH coalition, Jaysh al-Osra, which was the main force in the terrorist resistance in Raqqa until its fall, is made up of foreigners who are precisely the subject of the categorical claims of France. The basis of the Osra originally comprised of Tunisians and Europeans of Arab origin, many of whom had passed through the Foreign Legion. The Osra working languages are Arabic and French.
Raqqa had up to 300 such people. On all the rest, the French hold no claims, and their exit from Raqqa is without any substantive obstacle.

Interestingly, between 150 to 200 people who came from Russian regions, primarily Chechnya, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria, fought in the Raqqa offensive. As a result, as of October 15, there were approximately 300-400 fighters in the city who were neither going to flee nor surrender. Reportedly, these men took an oath of death, and consider themselves to be en masse suicide-attackers. As generally is the case, DAISH militants take this oath of allegiance before each operation. As of October 17, Raqqa still remained with a total of 2-3 districts that were still in the hands of the militia, which most likely were suicide bombers. It clearly appears that they are obviously planning to storm the city. The remaining militants have already fled the city under the protection of the SDF Kurds on October 14-15.

The bulk of the terrorists (according to some reports, about 400 persons) has left the city with several hostages, using them as human shields. At the moment, Raqqa is surrounded by the military of the Syrian Democratic Forces. The Alliance claims that it has given the militants an ultimatum to "either surrender or die." However, the militants retreating under the protection of the Kurds crossed the tributary of the Euphrates, Khabur, and headed towards Abu Kamal on the border with Iraq. Thus, the SDF and their American patrons acted, to say the least, dishonestly in relation to their "partners" in the anti-terrorist coalition, especially Russia. This, in general, should be expected. This is because the actions of the SDF and the inaction of the American air support have allowed DAISH to launch attacks on the Palmyra-Deir ez-Zor route and the Kurds to seize the largest oil fields in the SAR.

The excitement that this has generated is certainly premature. On October 16-17, Iraqi forces, with the support of the IRGC under the command of General Suleiman, in just one day regained the province of Kirkuk and all of its oil fields. Following this, on October 17, fearing an impending total defeat, the Kurds went ahead and also surrendered the territory to the Iraqi army, which they had taken under "guise" from the Arab provinces of Iraq. The Syrian Kurds now have something to think about. Considering that the Iraqi army, the Shiite militia and the pro-Iranian 'Hashid Shaabi', with the support of IRGC, have already "hacked through" the corridor on the Iraqi-Syrian border, through which they will be able to cross troops and military equipment to strike the positions of the SDF and join the Syrian-Russian contingent at Deir ez-Zor and Mayadin. The US will then have to abandon its bridgehead with military bases in Syrian Kurdistan, and the Kurds themselves will return to being under the control of Damascus.

At the same time, sensing that the actions of the Russian Aerospace Forces in northern SAR has yielded results, Ankara has also begun embarking on active military operations, entering the province of Idlib. The invasion of Idlib by Turkey has been strictly formally "sanctified" by the agreements in Astana. Just like Tehran, Ankara is the guarantor of the Astana agreements and exercises control over the "de-escalation zone" in Idlib inside this zone, while the Russian military police are stationed outside the zone. In fact, the Russian police officers are already there – in Afrin and North Hamah, given that in Hama, they are increasingly performing the role of line infantry, repulsing the attacks of the militants. Naturally, Bashar al-Assad did not consent to the Turkish invasion of Idlib. Therefore, it was by no accident that the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Walid Muallem, demanded that all foreign troops that were illegally stationed in Syria, that is, without the consent of Damascus, be withdrawn from the Syrian territory in a matter of days. Although the goal of Turkey is not to seize a piece of Syria, but to eliminate the Kurdish Rojava (for reference: a Kurdish de facto autonomous region in the SAR announced in 2016). The task is not simple, as two conditions are required to resolve it. The first is the existence in Damascus of a government that would be friendly to Turkey but categorically hostile to the idea of a Kurdish federation. Bashar Al-Assad is categorical to the Kurds, but unfriendly to Turkey. This creates a future momentum of the conflict. Turkey is therefore set to support the anti-Assad coalition in the expectation that, sooner or later, Russia will withdraw from Syria, and the task could be revisited.

At this stage, following the developments, Erdoğan has deployed some troops to block and strangle the Kurdish territories. The ultimate goal of the current operation will undoubtedly be the clash of the pro-Turkish puppets in Syria with the Afrin Kurds, and the Turkish Army will perform the role of logistic support for its militants. Roughly the same scenario was used during the “Euphrates Shield” operation. Although that did not achieve all its set goals and objectives, it can be generally considered a success. Then, the Turks failed to capture the key city of Manbij, but only because the Americans played against Erdoğan by also deploying their own troops. Manbij is key because it must pass the hypothetical pipeline from Iran to Turkey, and the US cannot leave such an important point without its control. The Turks do not hide that their operation is directed against the Kurds. In recent days, the Turkish leadership has made increasingly strong statements to the SDF, directly blaming the Americans for creating a terrorist buffer zone. The actions of the Turks today have allowed them to seize control of the southern zone of the Afrin canton and to actually take it into a blockade. The only remaining link to the outside world among the Kurds is...
now through Syrian territory.

Despite all these developments, it is still quite too early to talk about the imminent end of the conflict in Syria. Especially in light of the events in neighboring Iraq, where the Iraqi-Iranian coalition has succeeded in destroying the enemy and is already ready to throw itself into Syria for the final destruction of the Islamic State and, at the same time, the Kurdish quasi-state in the SAR, in which the US has become entrenched. If this happens, DAISH will be left with one way, to go south to Saudi Arabia, and create a new caliphate there.

But while this will not be a problem for Russia and Iran, it will indeed become a headache for the United States.

The only remaining question is how to squeeze the Turkish forces out of the SAR. But this can also be achieved if all the pro-Damascus forces decide to inflict a powerful blow on the Islamist factions and the armed opposition in the Idlib region.

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