

## Headlines:

- **Mosul Advance**
- **Russia's Libyan Project**
- **Trump says, No More Two States for Middle East**

## Details:

### Mosul Advance

This week Iraqi government forces have resumed their push towards western Mosul, the last major stronghold of ISIS in Iraq. Upon starting the initiative, the army took back several local villages, with the Eastern region largely in the hands of government. Iraqi forces have now all but surrounded the western part of Mosul. Concern has been voiced by the UN about the welfare of civilians trapped in Mosul, amid reports that they could number up to 650,000. Furthermore Western Mosul is considered even more densely population than the East. The offensive against the eastern part of the city was launched on 17 October, more than two years after jihadists overran Mosul before seizing control of much of northern and western Iraq. The UN said in late January that almost half of all the casualties in Mosul were civilians. At least 1,096 have been killed and 694 injured across Nineveh province since the start of October. This news comes after the Iraqi government has made significant advances in the region, whose military forces reached the Tigris River for the first time in the battle for Mosul in early January of 2017, marking a significant moment in the 12-week campaign to recapture so-called Islamic State's (IS) last major stronghold in the country.

### Russia's Libyan Project

This week, Russia has signed a new oil deal with Libya with the aim to redeveloping key oil fields in the region. Whilst most have said that this is the first significant step Russia has taken in the region, the reality is such that Russia has been a key ally of General Haftar whose forces control most of the oil fields in the country. Russia is not being seen as trying to expand its influence after Haftar requested Russian support to fight ISIS. Here, Haftar who opposes the Libyan GNA is framed as anti American hence fuelling the narrative of another Russia vs America. In reality, Libya is probably where US and Russia converge most on interests as leaks in late 2016 showed Haftar and US officials in conversation with each other. Haftar, a known CIA asset, has clearly been identified as a powerful personality who is able to control the various factions within Libya and can be another dictator in the region.

### Trump says, No More Two States for Middle East

US President Donald Trump speaking at a joint conference with the Jewish entity's leader Netanyahu on 15 February said he was open to a Middle East plan that doesn't include two separate states, i.e. the two state solution the US has pursued for decades is no longer its policy. Despite calling for two states the Jewish entity has expanded, it has taken over more and more land and the Muslim rulers have happily given up Muslim land. But like much of Trump's policies it remains to be seen if this will see the light of day. Whilst the US has turned a blind eye to the Jewish entity's expansion, it does not want to share the region with the Jewish entity and does not want it to strengthen to the point it no longer needs the US or even starts to compete with the US in the region. For these reason the two state solution was to also act as an instrument of containment to keep the Jewish entity into check. Only time will tell of America changes her policy, but the US does not see the Muslims gaining Palestine as part for any of its vision for the region.