

Headlines:

- **Fall of Ramadi**
- **Modi Visits Pakistan**
- **The Need for ISIS**

Details:

Fall of Ramadi

The Iraqi army and government declared victory over ISIS in the city of Ramadi. The declaration comes after security forces encircled the city and launched a final offensive over a week ago to seize the central administration complex. Ramadi is the capital of Anbar province, but it is a small piece of real estate in the broader battle in Iraq. Ramadi is just one location in a large and contested province that directly adjoins Syria to the west. Fallujah, Hit and areas west of Haditha still remain in ISIS hands and will be even more difficult and time-consuming to clear. The Iraqi army has previously won areas and quickly lose them again. Ramadi was previously taken by Iraqi security forces only to be lost again. So it remains to be seen if this victory was just a one off, or a new trend.

Modi Visits Pakistan

On Christmas day the prime minister of India, Narendra Modi paid a surprise visit to Pakistan whilst travelling back from his visit to Kabul. Modi was welcomed by Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif personally in Lahore, stating that the doors of Lahore are always open for him, a controversial statement, especially as Modi is referred to as the “Butcher of Gujrat” with many holding him responsible for the massacre of hundreds of Muslims in Gujrat, India, in 2002. Whilst Pakistani officials concentrate on mending relations with rivals India, the internal stability of Pakistan continues to deteriorate. On the 29th of December 2015 a suicide bombing took place outside a government building, the National Database and Registration Authority, in Mardan (northwest Pakistan), killing over 20 people. This attack takes the total to 14 this year with January containing almost 30% of the attacks alone, hardly surprising as the Pakistani military stepped up their campaign in North Waziristan, directly as a result of the Peshawar massacre that happened a year ago in December.

The Need for ISIS

On 29th December 2015, the Pentagon announced that two suspects in the Paris attacks claimed by ISIS were killed by coalition air strikes. These individuals were amongst 10 ISIS leadership figures who were killed with targeted airstrikes over the past month. This was an announcement made at the same time as the victory of the Iraqi army in seizing the centre of Ramadi after its fall earlier in the year. These simultaneous announcements seem to suggest an attempt to display to the world the success of coalition operations in order to combat the public discontentment in western nations. This discontentment continues to increase with an increased civilian death toll and numerous analysts commenting on how these airstrikes do nothing but restrict ISIS. This was confirmed by Aaron David Miller, a former adviser to US secretaries of state on Arab-Israeli negotiations, said: “With leaders it’s a deadly game of Whac-A-Mole: you kill one and others take their place. It’s a necessary but not sufficient part of any counter-terrorism strategy.” However, the constant denial of a possible ground offensive by Western nations continue to a point to an alternative reason for the airstrikes, which has been speculated to be the preservation of ISIS in order to restrict the movement of other rebel groups. This is whilst western diplomats propose political solutions which have the aim of preserving the current regime.