

Russia-Turkey split endangers anti-terror fight

By Sun Zhuangzhi

As Russia stepped up its strikes against the armed forces and facilities of the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and France seeks Russian coordination after the brutal attacks in Paris earlier this month, the possibility has emerged that Russia and European powers, who have been at odds since the Ukraine crisis, could work together. However, the situation abruptly changed after Turkey shot down a Russian warplane on Tuesday last week. The international anti-terrorism cooperation is subject to uncertainty and Russia's relationship with Turkey is undergoing a severe test.

In recent years, rampant terrorism has become both local and decentralized. This causes growing harm to the international community and makes it harder to prevent and combat terrorism. Given this, countries across the world have to work together and intensify

cooperation to cut off the multinational network of terrorism. Regrettably, in the context of strengthened geopolitical interests, double standards are set concerning terrorism and this prevents the formation of a unified anti-terrorism campaign. Anti-terrorism even sharpens the conflicts between countries and regional security is thereby worsened.

Russia and Turkey have maintained stable political and economic relations after the Cold War. Turkey doesn't completely side with the US and EU over the Ukraine issue and instead continues to expand its energy cooperation with Russia. On this basis, it is no surprise that the two countries will enhance cooperation on regional anti-terrorism. However, as Moscow and Ankara's strategic interests are closely related with countries in the Middle East, especially Syria and Iraq, they have opposite opinions on certain issues.

Syria, wracked by civil war

for over four years, is not only a flashpoint of terrorism, but a geopolitical whirlpool. Its neighbors and major global powers have become engaged in Syria's affairs to meet their own strategic interests. Russia's interests in the Mediterranean and aspiration of being a major power prompt Moscow to continue its long-standing support for the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The US partly intends to squeeze out Russian presence by fostering Syrian rebels and putting pro-Western forces in an advantageous position.

Meanwhile, Turkey, as a NATO member, sides with the US over the Syria issue. It strongly advocates setting up safe zone in Syrian areas close to Turkey. In this case, Turkey can hinder refugees from flooding into its territory, exert its political influence on Syria to consolidate its position as a power, and also prevent the state-building of the Kurds from splitting Turkey. So when

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Russia conducted intensive military attacks against IS to help Syrian government troops, the US and Turkey found their plans disrupted.

In fact, Russia, the US and Turkey have escalated their finger-pointing at each other over the Syria issue. With Russia's air strikes expanding, Turkey warned against Russian jets crossing the Turkish border. It seems the warplane tragedy should not have happened. Fundamentally it's because neither side would back down in terms of its national interests.

Some observers hold that after the warplane incident, Russia and Turkey will seek to address the crisis through political and diplomatic means, and European countries and even the US will get involved in mediation so that countries can reach consensus on fighting against IS and forge international anti-terrorism cooperation. However, the terror attacks in Paris have already prompted countries to realize the importance of cooperation, but Russia's warplane was still shot down.

To reverse the detrimental trend, countries involved have to throw over the narrow-minded considerations for geopolitical interests and prioritize global peace and regional stability in follow-up actions.

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In Paris climate conference coal will still be elephant in the room

By Gal Luft

Outside the UN General Assembly the Paris Conference of Parties (COP21) will be the largest gathering of world leaders. Such an impressive turnout of 147 heads of state and governments is a remarkable achievement for those who root for a binding global treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But behind the climate kumbaya lies a painful truth: Many of those leaders will not attend the summit out of concern for the world's changing climate, but rather to ensure that their countries, mostly developing ones, don't end up sacrificed on the altar of climatism.

It is a sad testimony to the human condition that 2 billion people still suffer from energy poverty, having no light to read, no energy to cook a meal and no power to provide clean water. Energy poverty is a damper on global growth as it prevents the poor from elevating themselves economically.

Many climate proponents argue that poverty is partly a result of harsh climate conditions. It is the droughts, floods and storms that exacerbate poverty. Some go even further, linking wars and conflicts, like the Syrian civil war and the attendant mass migration, to climate change. According to this view, if we only cooled the planet slightly, the poor will be spared from all these problems.

However, the reality is that if COP21 leads to a legally binding cap on carbon emissions the developing world could be worse off. The reason is that the workhorse of developing Asia, where most of the world's poor reside, has al-



Illustration: Shen Lan/GT

ways been and will continue to be coal.

Coal fires nearly 80 percent of China's power sector. India, where the number of energy poor is larger than the entire US population, uses coal for 60 percent of its power generation. The combined 600 million people of the 10 Southeast Asian countries are also heavily dependent on coal. The region's energy demand is projected to increase 80 percent in the next 20 years, a rise equivalent to Japan's current demand, and three quarters of the newly approved installed power capacity in the region is coal-based.

It is not that Asians particularly like coal. To the contrary, coal is a major source of air pollution which causes numerous health problems. But at the same time coal is vastly cheaper and

more plentiful than any other source of baseload electricity. Natural-gas power plants are twice as expensive to construct as coal plants, and natural gas in the region is more than four times as expensive as in the US. Renewables will take decades – if ever – to reach parity with coal, and there are problems of reliability.

Rich countries may be able to afford to rid themselves of coal. And this they do. Amber Rudd, the UK's secretary of energy, announced recently that Britain will shut down all of its power plants within a decade. In the US where natural gas prices are extremely low, coal has been under attack for some time. The Obama administration is not only making it impossible to build new coal plants domestically, but it also pressures

other countries to deny financing to coal projects abroad.

Coal will therefore be the elephant in the room in Paris. The rich will try to coerce the developing world into using less coal, using various carrots and sticks as well as peer pressure. This will leave the poor with only two choices: resist and cause the collapse of the talks or agree to accept goals that will never be fulfilled.

Instead of vetoing coal altogether, the developed world should direct its resources to steering and incentivizing the coal sectors of the developing world toward better and more efficient coal utilization.

But such an incremental approach may not be as emotionally satisfying for leaders of the rich as delivering coal a coup de grace.

Those leaders who are unable to defeat IS, pull their economies from stagnation and protect the borders of their countries will try to deliver a phony victory against what they view as the planet's public enemy No.1. Sadly, if they get their way it will be the world's poor that will pay the price.

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