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. It is a sad testimony to the human condition that a billion people will 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 even further link wars and conflicts, like the Syrian civil war and theendant mass migration, to climate change. According to this view, if we only cooled the planet slightly, 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 a 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 the rich will try to coerce the developing world into using less coal, using various carrots and sticks as well as peer pressure.

The rich will richly well funded to pay for their way it will be the world’s public enemy No. 1. Sadly, if they get their way it will be the world’s poor that will pay the price.

By Sun Zhuangzhi

Russia, Turkey split endangers anti-terror fight

As Russia stepped up its strikes against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and France sees 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.

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