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Coalition an Opportunity to Truly Stomp Out Politicized Jihadism

by Darrin Antler

As the world mourns the twin tragedies of last week in Paris and Beirut, it appears there may be a shift in the tactical landscape in the fight against ISIS.

At the G20 meetings last week in Turkey, Vladimir Putin openly solicited and welcomed help from friendly and not so friendly nations alike as it was confirmed that the downed Russian passenger plane in Sinai was a result of a terrorist planted bomb. ISIS had taken credit last week, but confirmation was sought by Russian authorities. At the time it may have been regarded as a political gesture but the attacks in Beirut and specifically Paris have changed the landscape to a great degree.

French President Francois Hollande proposed something similar to a joint assembly of French politicians at the Palace of Versailles. Hollande has called for a global coalition of all those nations threatened by Jihadi terrorism – at this point that call would address many countries throughout the globe who have been victimized by the scourge of militarised zealotry. Key to his proposal was that all nations put aside foreign policy divisions for a common goal.

The last time that this type of effort was undertaken on a global scale, with the pairing of Russia and the traditional NATO powers, was during the Second World War. Granted, the global realities are much different and as much damage as ISIS and other jihadist groups have done, they are nothing compared to the Nazi war machine.

It remains to be seen whether there is enough integrity to swallow some political pride, especially as it pertains to the United States, but Russia has at least made a gesture and it has been reciprocated by France.

There are many impediments to such a coalition:

- Russia has been a strong ally of the Assad regime but that support has seemed to wane in recent weeks as they have stopped mentioning Assad when publicly addressing the situation in Syria. It is without question that the United States would not entertain the possibility whatsoever that Assad continues to rule over Syria.
- Areas of responsibility and rules of engagement would be particularly tricky aspects to any coalition effort as NATO and Russia have very different standards.
- Egypt and their role in this quagmire has to be addressed. The Egyptian government has covered up and manipulated much of the coverage inside of its own borders and tried to convince the Russian government that the downed airliner was not a terrorist attack, but an accident. With Russia talking tough, Egypt may panic and it could lead to further instability in the once stable nation.

- Command and control could also be a potential nightmare. The history between the west and Russia is no mystery. There could be a battle over tactics and mission directives between the NATO nations and the Russians.
- And finally, what would happen in a 'friendly fire' incident where a Russian aggression cost the life of a NATO soldier or vice versa? Such an incident, unless planned for, could cause incredible damage, diplomatically and militarily.

Canada obviously will play a role in such a coalition, but what that role will be remains to be seen. Prime Minister Trudeau is resolved to end the bombing missions at some point and has suggested that Canada would have more of a role in training and education of resistance fighters. This seems like a good plan even in the wake of the attacks last week. The aerial firepower being freshly deployed by France and Russia alongside the UK and US fighters can account for any potential deficit by the removal of Canadian jets from the region.

It is a Herculean task ahead of the world leaders to agree to a coalition framework that will appease all participating nations, in addition to the design and implementation of such a coalition, not to mention the transition plan once ISIS falls in order to ensure that another power vacuum doesn't crop up to be taken advantage of by a new generation of thugs. However, if the most powerful nations in the world stand side by side and commit to a concerted and cooperative effort, ISIS would have to fight for their collective lives in a real war. And ask the Nazis how that worked out for them.

Darrin Antler is a retired Weapons Engineering Technician of the Royal Canadian Navy. He is a freelance writer who writes about sociology, politics, combat sports, culture and national defence. His work has been published by RUSI(NS), The Trident, Your News, The Smell Test, MMAspot and MMAnews, amongst others. This work is the sole opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Canadian Department of National Defence, or the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia. Darrin can be reached for questions, comments or solicitations at darrinantler@gmail.com.