Why Russia is Serious About Fighting Terrorism and the US Isn’t

In the few days that Russia has been fighting terrorism, it has achieved more than the US coalition has in years. According to the New York Times, Russian fighter jets are conducting nearly as many strikes in a typical day as the American-led coalition has been carrying out each month this year, a number which includes strikes conducted in Iraq - as well as Syria.

Even though the US has been bombing ISIS for over a year, ISIS has only grown more powerful and gained more ground in Syria. A few months ago ISIS took over the ancient city of Palmyra, a UNESCO world heritage-listed site.

In spite of the fact that the US government acknowledged ISIS cannot be defeated without ground troops, they have refused to work with the Syrian military. The Syrian military is the only UN-recognized legitimate force on the ground and the only force capable and willing to fight ISIS. Conversely, Russia is coordinating with the Syrian military on the ground assisting Syrian troops against terrorism.

The disparity between the US’s proclaimed goal of fighting terrorism and their lack of achievement towards this goal, shows a lack of honesty on the part of the US when it comes to its real agenda in Syria. The US is capable of more owing to the fact its military is the most powerful and technologically advanced force in the world. It is therefore logical to conclude that they are willfully throwing the fight against terrorism in Syria. The reasons for this should be further examined.

ISIS Serves US Geopolitical Interests, Threatens Russia’s

It has become increasingly clear that the US’s main objectives in Syria is not their expressed goal of ‘fighting ISIS’. Their goal are regime change, isolating Russian influence, balkanization of Syria Iraq, and the creation of failed states. US presidential candidate and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton herself recently stated that “removing Assad is the top priority”. The presence of ISIS and other terrorists groups serves these interests.

The US sees the Syrian state as one of the last spheres of Russian influence beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union and a threat to the US’s Israeli ally in the region. The US has a history of using terrorism to topple governments friendly to Russia. Al Qaeda itself was borne of the US objective to topple the Soviet friendly government of Afghanistan. The dismemberment of Russian-friendly Serbia and the creation of Kosovo was done via the same means.

More recently ISIS was a direct result of the US’s war on Iraq and it was only established in Libya and Syria due to overt US-backed regime change efforts in those countries. Although Libya and Iraq did not have relations with Russia as strong as Syria’s, Russia was still their main weapons supplier. Therefore it is unsurprising that in the days after Russia entered the war in Syria, Saudi clerics and the Muslim Brotherhood - both US state assets - declared ‘jihad’ on Russia.

The former Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) Chief Michael Flynn said in an interview that he believed the US had
made a wilful decision to allow ISIS to grow in Syria. A 2012 declassified DIA report, predicted that if the US and its allies continued to destabilize Syria by arming extremist insurgents “there is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria... and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime.”

The CIA had trained thousand of ‘rebels’, whom they admit were trained not to fight ISIS, but to fight the Assad government and Syrian military. The Washington Post reports:

“...the CIA has since 2013 trained some 10,000 rebels to fight Assad’s forces. Those groups have made significant progress against strongholds of the Alawites, Assad’s sect.” This shows that the US’s Agenda in Syria is regime change and it demonstrates their readiness to spawn terrorists groups to that end.

**Russia Has More to Gain by Truly Fighting Terrorism**

On the other hand, Russia has clear geopolitical interests behind defending the Syrian state against terrorism. Syria has been an ally of Russia for decades and it hosts Russia’s only Mediterranean naval base. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov stated that Russia is entering Syria to prevent ‘another Libyan scenario,’ or in other words - to prevent it from turning into a failed state as the US had done to Libya.

Furthermore Russian interests in fighting terrorism are tied directly to Russia’s own national security. Russia has had problems in the past with terrorism within their own borders and in particular, Chechnya. Chechen fighters who have joined ISIS in Syria, have now threatened to take the fight to Moscow. Jabhat Al Nusra, Syria’s Al Qaeda faction, have also called for terror attacks in Russia. In an interview with 60 minutes, Russia’s President Vladimir Putin stated that it is better to fight terrorists in Syria than wait until they return to Russia.

Terrorism poses far greater risks to Russia’s national security than it does to the US. Not only is their proximity closer, but terrorists in Russia have the potential to cleave off part of the state and overrun entire Russian towns. This is not the case for the US, whose only risk to national security would be civilian deaths due to bombings and that is not necessarily something that the US government would find a real ‘problem’. In fact, they might even see it as a possible opportunity.

**The US Seeks Only to Contain ISIS**

Ignoring the drum beating of the NATO owned media and listening closely to statements by US policy makers, it can be understood that the US’s objective is not to defeat ISIS, but to contain them within Syria and Iraq’s borders indefinitely. This was admitted to by a member of the current US government and Democratic Party Representative, Adam Smith, who stated to CNN:

“...we need to find partners that we can work with in Syria to help us contain ISIS. So it is a difficult problem to figure out the best strategy. I agree, they have safe haven there in parts of Syria and that will have to be part of the strategy for containing ISIS.”

Chairman of the U.S. House Intelligence Committee Representative, Devin Nunes, told CBS news:

“I think we are containing ISIS within the borders of Iraq and Syria. Outside of that we’re not doing much.”

US President, Barack Obama, himself stated that he would like to like to:

“...continue to shrink ISIL’s sphere of influence, its effectiveness, its financing, its military capabilities to the point where it is a manageable problem.”

This suggests that President Obama wants to maintain ISIS’s sphere power to a contained manageable circle, like a diseases that is treated but never cured. Obama perhaps chose this policy on the advice of the Brooking Institute think-tank, which stated:

“Should we defeat ISIS? Rather than defeat, containing their activities within failed or near-failing states is the best option for the foreseeable future.”

**The US is Not Actually Bombing ISIS**
The US bombing of ISIS has been mostly nominal, an exercise in perception management. Although the US military makes regular claims to have bombed specific targets, rarely is video evidence of the bombings published. On the other hand the Russian military regularly releases video of most of its strikes on Russia Today. There is no reason to accept US military statements at face value.

Facts indicate that the US refuses to bomb ISIS even when it has the opportunity. Leaked documents show that the US had forbidden its fighter pilots from targeting a long list of ISIS training camps, camps which turn out thousands of fighters a month. Award winning journalist, Robert Fisk, told the Australian program Lateline that the US could have bombed a convoy of ISIS militants who were taking over Palmyra, but instead allowed them to take over a Syrian military post and the ancient City which they have now begun to destroy. Likewise the US has largely avoided bombing ISIS and Al Qaeda targets in the Syrian district of North Hama, in an attempt to prevent Syrian troops from gaining ground. Russia is now striking these targets long before the benefactors of US-granted impunity. In the times the US has dropped bombs on ISIS run territory, they have used it as an opportunity to destroy Syria's oil infrastructure.

The US Has 'Forgotten' its War with al Qaeda, Now Protects It

Perhaps the most ironic development of Russia’s involvement in Syria’s fight against terror, is the anger expressed by the US government and its media at Russia’s bombing of Al Qaeda (Jabhat Al Nusra) targets.

Former US National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the man largely responsible for the creation of Al Qaeda, expressed through twitter his frustration at the fact Russia was targeting Al Qaeda as well as ISIS.

Pro-NATO media have all but forgotten the US's war with Al Qaeda and in the last year avoided any mention of Al Qaeda’s existence in Syria, preferring to concentrate on ISIS instead. As of 2015, Google news engine reveals 219 million hits for ISIS and only 3 million hits for Al Qaeda. In keeping with this trend, Pro-NATO media has avoided bringing to light the fact Russia is bombing Al Qaeda. Exposing this fact would highlight the US’s inaction against Al Qaeda, while it has been fighting alongside the rebels.

In a CNN article accusing Russia of not targeting ISIS but rather the “Syrian rebels”, two maps displayed from the Institute for the Study of War show a very telling story. The first shows the areas in which Jabhat al Nusra controls or jointly controls parts of Syria, with its allies - the so called moderate rebels receiving US-backing. But on the next map which shows the location of Russian strikes, Jabhat al Nusra territory can scarcely be seen and the jointly controlled areas have been removed completely.

Though it can be said that the Nusra run areas are obstructed by highly concentrated Russian strikes, which showing Russia’s commitment to wiping out of the terrorist group. The fact that the second map does not even show the jointly held Al Qaeda areas and does not make Al Qaeda’s presence clear, reveals an attempt to downplay Russia’s fight against Al Qaeda. The reason for this is to conceal US’s comparative inaction against Al Qaeda, which makes up the bulk of the CIA backed insurgency. It also fits with NATO’s narrative that Russia is only targeting the so called ‘moderate rebels’. The US is angry Russia is bombing its Al Qaeda assets and hence are painting Russia as bombing ‘the good guys’ in order to pressure them to stop.

The US is Continuing to Fund and Arm Terrorists

The map further illustrates how US-backed ‘moderate rebels’ work alongside Al Qaeda, a fact which has become such common knowledge. Former Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, admitted to McClatchy news that the rebels supported Al Qaeda.

Recently ‘moderate rebels’ from the so-called “Free Syrian Army” Division 16 joined Al Nusra in their attacks against the Kurdish city of Sheikh Maqsud in Aleppo. In the past, commanders of rebel groups labeled ‘moderate’ by the US government have even fought alongside ISIS and reiterated their support of ISIS in satellite news interviews. Pro-NATO media have even been reduced to calling the rebels ‘relatively moderate’. Relative to Al Qaeda and ISIS. In any case, ‘moderate’ has always been a relative term, unlike the word secular which is the NATO run media dare not use to describe the rebels.
Last week the US abandoned a Pentagon program training rebels to fight ISIS, after all but five defected to Al Qaeda taking their weapons and training with them. Past attempts by the US to arm ‘vetted rebels’ has resulted in TOW anti-tank missiles ending up in the hands of Al Qaeda. But instead of admitting to the fact that ‘moderate rebels’ do not exist and ceasing the illegal armament of extremist insurgents, the US government has instead chosen to openly back “established rebel groups” who have close ties to Al Qaeda. The US is now sending yet another shipment of TOW missiles to these extremist groups, through their ally Saudi Arabia.

Al Qaeda is not the only terrorist group the US has been accused of arming. This month, footage filmed by the Iraqi military of an oil refinery that had been captured by ISIS, shows US supply crates full of food and weapons delivered to Islamic State militants by parachute drop. In 2014, footage of another US supply drop to ISIS in Kobane Syria also emerged online. Only a few days ago the US airdropped 50 tons of ammunition into Hasake region of Syria, an area partly run by ISIS. Most of the weaponry used by ISIS is US made. In January this year, an Iraqi MP Majid al-Ghraoui publically accused the US of supplying ISIS with weapons through airdrops.

**Iraq Trusts Russia More Than the US in a Real Fight Against Terrorism**

The Iraqi government has become increasingly suspicious of the US’ lack of real commitment in fighting ISIS. On the other hand, Russian strikes have thus far been so effective against ISIS that the Iraqi government has asked Russia to take on a bigger role against ISIS, than the US.

Russia has in turn signaled that it may start bombing ISIS in Iraq as well as Syria, with the permission of the Iraqi government. Unlike the US, Russia has not broken international law and has sought permission to enter Iraq and Syria from each respective state’s legitimate government.

With these actions Russia has called the US’s bluff on fighting ISIS, and is effectively forcing the US to do a better job of convincing the Iraqi government that it is truly fighting ISIS. If Russia does enter Iraqi airspace, it will more easily cross into Syrian airspace to provide supplies to the Syrian government, since the US has bullied many countries in the region to close their airspace to Russian aircrafts. Furthermore, if Iraq asks Russia to intervene it is a scenario that would reverse any of the influence the US had gained in Iraq, throughout its lengthy occupation of the country since 2003.

The US has been backed into a corner and in doing so, has exposed itself and its allies as the source of terrorism, not champions truly fighting it. Terrorism has always been a means by which the US has sought to deconstruct Russian spheres of influences. Ironically over the last decade it has also simultaneously perpetuated the myth that it is actually fighting a war against terror. However as its allied states grow increasingly tired of this game, how long can the US continue to juggle this duplicity, before the entire deck of cards crumbles?

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