



IISA'S SITUATION ANALYSIS: **DOWNING OF RUSSIAN PLANE: AFTERMATHS AND IMPACTS**

Downing of Russian plane: Aftermath and implications

Turkey has shot down a Russian military plane, which it claimed had strayed well into Turkish territory. Turkey claims that it gave the pilots at least 10 warnings and then shot down the SU24 plane, as an act of self-defence. Russia has responded angrily. President Putin has called the action by Turkey a 'stab in the back' and has warned for 'serious consequences' in Russian-Turkish relations. At the time of this writing, multiple diplomatic and security-based activities are taking place. This includes an eminent an 'extraordinary meeting' among NATO and Military attachés for both Russia and Turkey are being called on for assistance.

The implications of this strategically significant event are numerous. However, we first must look back in what context this event has taken place. This incident comes at a time when Russian intervention in Syria has generally been accepted by the West as a 'ground reality'. Russian intervention in September was seen with sceptical eyes by other NATO countries, but as Vienna meetings later demonstrated, the West has started to 'give into' (as Turkey may see it) the Russian argument that Assad's fate - and consequently the Syrian conflict - should be put on a back burner (or at least for now); the fight

against the Islamic State (IS) should be given priority. When adding the Paris attacks to this equation, a new dynamic emerges in the region: IS is *the* problem, not Assad or the Syrian civil war.

Additionally, the Russian intervention, under this new emerging context, may be given a positive spin because it brings everyone on board to tackle IS.

The Russian intervention and the events that have followed have seriously impact some of the regional actors strategic ball game in Syria. Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have vehemently opposed Assad, along with the US supported opposition groups. Russian intervention had a serious impact on Turkish, Qatari and Saudi strategy which had been built over the past few years.

This leads to the ultimate question that many analysts and policy-makers may be wondering right now: What will Russia do?

Although the same question was asked only a few weeks ago, with Russian invasion of Syria, the changing contexts and fallout of this event may shuffle the deck once more.

Russian options are both diplomatic and military. Diplomatically, President Putin

will engage in serious ‘war of words’ and remind Turkey (while reassuring his own population), that he is a leader who means what he says and who means business. Russian will use the momentum built in Vienna, and in post-Paris attacks, to put blame on Turkey in order to push Western countries ,particularly France and the US, to ‘support’ Russian efforts against IS in Syria. Russia, however will not respond militarily to Turkey.

Instead, Russia will use this incident to use much more aggressive force to destroy opposition targets in north, west and

coastal regions. Russia will attempt to ‘disallow’ any unification that maybe taking place within the Syrian opposition forces. Russia will also embolden or strengthen ground offensives against opposition groups supported by Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Russian ‘advisors’ among the ongoing or expanding ground offensive cannot be discounted. Similarly, Russia may also send more military reinforcements in Syria. Thus, the ‘plane incident’ will have serious strategic ramifications on multiple fault lines.

About Us

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