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Paris Attacks are Game Changer: First Look at Possible Ramifications (II)

Andrei AKULOV

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The November 13-14 atrocity to change European politics and everyday life

Some imponderables will inevitably exert impact on Europe. Attacks as sophisticated and coordinated as these require a lot of. The terror acts spur advance planning and communications. France only recently passed a law with the most far-reaching snooping powers in Europe.

The U.K. two weeks ago re-introduced a watered-down bill of its notorious “Snooper’s Charter”, which for the first time explicitly allows police to hack into computers, and collect large volumes

of personal communications data.

It also legally obliges telecoms and data companies to help police operations to bypass encryption. The bill now faces a much easier passage through parliament, and may even be beefed up again in reaction to the attacks.

The terrorist attacks probably mean the end of border-free Europe.

Getting rid of internal borders was one of the great achievements of the EU. The refugee flows have made one country after another reinstate border checks, first in the Balkans, and now in the 'preferred destination' countries of Sweden and Germany.

The Paris attacks will embolden those who criticize German Chancellor Angela Merkel for her complacency about the risks of Muslim immigration. If she is replaced, the Germany's stance on immigrants may change.

Nationalist parties have been gaining ground across Europe, not least France's own National Front, which faces regional voters in a mere three weeks. The National Front, which has a long history of hostility to Muslim immigration and which has also argued for the restoration of frontier controls, may well benefit in the aftermath of the attacks. Some of its arguments were, in any case, already seeping into the discourse of the traditional centre-right parties.

«It will strengthen Euroskeptic parties and we'll see relatively soon with the regional elections in France, where the National Front is leading, and we'll see how much of a lead they end up getting. But I think you're going to see it in the UK with [the UK Independence Party] and the pressure on [Prime Minister] David Cameron in terms of renegotiating Britain's role in the EU», says Matt Mayer, visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. «That kind of nativist reaction by the people is going to make it harder for pro-EU people to keep things together».

In Spain, the radical left Podemos party has become an electoral force with little more than a month to go before a general election. In Poland, a newly installed conservative government, which has been opposed to an EU-imposed quota of migrants, hinted Saturday that it will not accept quotas imposed by the EU, although the country's new Prime Minister Beata Szydlo said on November 16 after being sworn in that she would honor the prior government's commitments.

Already facing anti-immigration sentiment, the attacks could further complicate efforts by European governments to persuade their populations to accept this burden.

Fears have been regularly stoked by reports that IS operatives could be hiding among the 800,000 migrants who have arrived this year, mostly on the shores of Greece and Italy.

The refugee crisis had already strained this system to breaking point, with a host of countries including Germany and Sweden re-imposing border controls while Austria, Hungary and others are building border fences. Reports that one suspected assailant in the Paris attacks had entered the European Union through Greece — on a Syrian passport — could prompt member countries to restore travel checks in a hurry. Once installed, new restrictions could prove difficult to

dismantle.

Revamping anti-terror strategy

In Vienna the major powers agreed on a timeline for a transition to a new government in Syria - the key prerequisite for coordinated military action against Islamic State. Peace in Syria would end the biggest geopolitical risk in the world today. It could also improve the chances of a settlement between Europe and Russia over the Ukraine conflict.

White House officials note a recent increase in activity, including U.S. strikes against Islamic State's leadership, an intensified air campaign and the deployment of special operations forces in Syria, as a preview of the more muscular approach. Officials have confirmed that the US delivered a second shipment of ammunition to a newly formed coalition of Arab and Kurdish forces battling Islamic State.

The United States has also ramped up the intelligence it shares with France to help that country better strike Islamic State targets in Iraq and Syria.

In addition, President Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed after a meeting in Turkey on a broad process for resolving the Syria war with a noticeable shift to a less-critical tone regarding Russia's military effort there.

Paris is preparing to triple the number of its aircraft in the Middle East for operations against Islamic State militants, following what Mr. Hollande described as an act of war by Islamic State.

NATO has actually established a coalition with Russia in the fight against the Islamic State. President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian naval and other military assets in Syria to ally with French navy ships deployed to the eastern Mediterranean.

NATO's top official, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg — who attended the meeting of the EU's European Council on November 17 said, "I welcome that Russia is part of that and I welcome that Russia is sitting down with many of the nations to try and find a political solution. Russia can play a constructive role in Syria."

Actually NATO has not been playing an active role in the fight against the Islamic State so far. The change of rhetoric tells the US stance is changed.

"In any war it is usually wise to enlarge the roster of one's allies and reduce the roster of enemies. If ISIS is the implacable enemy and must be annihilated, we should welcome all volunteers", writes Patrick Buchanan, an American paleoconservative political commentator, author, columnist, politician and broadcaster. A man of great experience, he knows what he is talking about. Buchanan was a senior advisor to presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, who sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1992 and 1996. And ran on the Reform Party ticket in the 2000 presidential election.

«It increases the chances of greater U.S.-Russian cooperation, since Moscow can provide the

direct military engagement Washington is unwilling to provide», says Donald Jensen, senior fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations in his comments on recent terrorist attacks.

Another suggestion comes from Nicolas Sarkozy, former president of France and the most likely standard bearer of the centre-right in France's 2017 presidential contest. Sarkozy said that it was time to treat Russia as a full-fledged ally in the fight against ISIS and Islamic extremism.

The terrorist attacks in Paris will change a lot of things. The pain is here to stay along with the realization the time is right for changing mindset and attitudes. The world will never be the same, the major world actors facing the common enemy have the responsibility for making it a better place to live in.