

# First Things First – Exterminate ISIS

In general, we want to encourage politicians to do after they win elections what they promised they would do before the election, and from that perspective it is hard to blame Justin Trudeau for continuing to promise to withdraw Canada's CF-18's from the air war against the Islamic State (ISIS). I don't think it was a pledge that ever should have been made, and I commended the Bloc Québécois leader, Gilles Duceppe, in the one shining moment of his campaign, for supporting Stephen Harper on this point. Duceppe's position was consistent with the Quebec nationalists' absurd preoccupation with banning the niqab at the ceremony for admission to the citizenship of Canada (which Duceppe wishes Quebec to abandon). And the Trudeau position was consistent with his unjust imputation of misplaced macho aggressiveness to former prime minister Stephen Harper in deploying the aircraft in the first place. In a blending of hope with benign intuition and a sliver of first-hand information, I attributed Trudeau's pledge to withdraw Canada's very small air contingent from the Allied force attacking ISIS to well-founded reservations about American leadership of the coalition. The whole effort was only mounted after U.S. President Barack Obama's pretense that that there were no more terrorists had been exposed as completely fraudulent after his abrupt and churlish departure from Iraq, leaving most Iraqis in the hand of Iran, and control of Sunni Iraq torn between Iran and ISIS. This was the farthest possible outcome from American ambitions when the U.S. invaded that country in 2003.

What ensued was a desultory effort to train the battered hulk of Iraq's Sunni military and a Western air campaign in the tradition of the Yugoslav Wars: bombing from such high altitudes it was a war worth killing for but not worth dying

for. The action, replete with astonishing affronts from the Russians, who purported to shoulder the U.S. out of Syrian air space when they felt like doing so, plodded along in this unconvincing manner, with Obama portentously announcing on Nov. 13 that ISIS had been "contained." This was shortly after what he had called the "JV team" (Junior Varsity) killed 224 people in a Russian airliner blown up in Egyptian airspace, and mere hours before it murdered 129 innocents in Paris. Obama has continued his unutterably irritating practice of referring to "extreme behaviour" but not to Islamist terrorism. But France has declared a state of emergency in response to what it considers an act of war, and has invoked the European Union's Lisbon pledge requiring all members to assist one of the EU countries that has been attacked. France has been one of Europe's most influential countries since the beginning of the nation state, and its responses to the Paris outrages will be consequential. French President François Hollande is trying to co-ordinate a vastly escalated counter-offensive against ISIS with Russia, the United States, and other countries, and Obama's virtual combat against a supposedly gasping rag-tag of demented amateurs has suddenly become much more purposeful.

Where the American president had infamously drawn a "red line" over Syrian president Assad's gassing of his own citizens, and then abdicated the prerogatives of the commander-in-chief to the hydra-headed Congress before dumping the issue into the lap of the mischief-making Russian President Vladimir Putin, French and Russian fleets are now to rendezvous in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle will bring 40 warplanes into the theatre for intensive and continuous attacks on ISIS. It is probably too much to hope that Obama's inexplicable mental block against taking the anti-ISIS effort seriously can be entirely overcome, and he has never shown the slightest interest in keeping the Western Alliance ticking over. But even he may have some concerns if the French and Russians stampede almost every other serious

country into concerted and severe action, which is entirely justified, long overdue, and would be successful, and effectively set themselves at the head of a coalition of everyone who wants to do something about ISIS slaughtering civilians almost indiscriminately over an ever-wider arc of territory and in increasingly more appalling massacres. Obama's aim has appeared to be not only to do nothing, but to discourage others from doing anything that might disturb his effort to appease Muslim extremists, whether sectarian zealots like the Iranian theocracy or secular despots like Assad.

His policy is insane, and has been a conspicuous failure, unless the recent acquiescence in an eventual Iranian nuclear military capability miraculously makes the world safer. But he is assumedly sincere and thinks turning the other cheek will accomplish something useful. The Paris outrages and Russian airliner bombing may not convince him to change direction, but they may effectively depose the United States as the world's chief alliance leader, until it chooses to resume that role. Such a development would spike Obama's offensive of preemptive concessions. An unlikely group of countries making common cause, probably including both the moderate Muslims like Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as well as Israel and even Iran, will then be interim trustees for the United States as principal power in the world while Obama plays out his pacifistic fantasies in solitude (no other country takes this charade of his seriously), until the next U.S. president is installed. Neither Mrs. Clinton nor any of the serious Republicans will continue Obama's replacement of foreign policy with psychiatry and his transformation of the Pentagon into the Peace Corps.

In all of these circumstances, Prime Minister Trudeau should reconsider his strategy and the country's interest. He is unambiguous in his animosity to ISIS and his desire to increase the contribution to training anti-ISIS Sunni Muslim forces is good policy. Our air contribution has been

tokenistic (six CF-18's and three support planes), but the whole campaign has been tokenistic up to now – a few missions a day and certainly nothing on a scale that anyone would expect to be more than a nuisance to ISIS. It now appears possible that substantial special forces from major military powers will be inserted to lead and support local forces against ISIS and that the air war will be heavily intensified, with, if past French and Russian practice are any guide, a more philosophical view of the misfortunes of collateral damage. ISIS only has about 50,000 active warriors and one of the many irritations of this entire subject has been the failure, despite the unspeakable barbarity of the enemy, as these latest incidents highlight, to apply a level of force that had any chance of success. There should now be a constant offensive, led by exceptionally qualified special forces of serious powers and with overwhelming close air support. The amenable locals should be armed and encouraged properly and the entire operation supported by no-fly zones where appropriate and the immediate strangulation of any oil revenues or trans-border crossing points to the terrorists. First things first, and once ISIS has been exterminated, the chief authors of that action should be able to work out a ceasefire in Syria and Iraq; it certainly can't happen while ISIS is still completely out of control and murdering hundreds of Europeans every few weeks.

If any such scenario as this unfolds over the next few days, as the French president visits his American and Russian analogues to co-ordinate such a response, Justin Trudeau should arrange for President Hollande to ask him to reconsider his decision to withdraw the CF-18s and to confirm his decision to increase the training and co-ordination effort, and the prime minister should comply with the request. Circumstances have changed and this is a Manichaeian conflict between comparative good and absolute evil, and it is an unconditional moral imperative that Canada be on the right side and in proper strength. No reasonable person would

criticize the new government for adjusting its policy to sharply changed circumstances.

It should, however, stick to its promise of accepting 25,000 refugees. Obviously, they have to be screened carefully, a process that would be made easier if a large proportion of them were Christians, the first victims of these Islamist lunatics. There are no Christian jihadists, and the principal and most numerous victims of ISIS should not be revictimized, whether Christian or Muslim, because the West is finally awakening to the proportions of the evil the refugees are fleeing.

Nor can we engage in any wholesale disparagements. The cardinal-archbishop of Paris rightly said last weekend that the Muslims are not our enemies but that they must solve these internecine problems, and the rest of us can do what we can to help, including the military destruction of ISIS, but this is not a war between entire religions or cultures; it is a war with the most extreme enemies of civilization. I agree entirely with the efforts of the Muslim mayor of Calgary, Naheed Nenshi, in seeking to avoid negative typecasting. I would take his efforts a bit more seriously if he had not stomped out, huffing and thumping absurdly, from a speech I gave in his province a few weeks ago, when I made the point that while Canada's native people were the victims of many injustices, they were never the subject of an official Canadian policy of any form of genocide. When so defamed, and particularly by ourselves, we white Christian Canadians are victims too, though only of slander, but the enlightened Muslim mayor of a great Canadian city should have no part of it.

Opposite ISIS, we are all in this together, and the more efficiently we kill them in Iraq and Syria, the less likely they are to penetrate Canada.

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