



**Combating Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) Tabletop Exercise
Migration Crisis: Security Challenges and Policy Recommendations
George C. Marshall Center, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany (June 1-3, 2016)**

Introduction

European leaders and policymakers have struggled to manage the largest mass migration since World War II. The crisis has challenged countries across Europe to arrive at a coordinated solution and has been a source of political upheaval, economic challenges, and societal apprehension. It also raises pressing and vexing questions about the European and NATO security environment. While the vast majority of migrants and asylum seekers are fleeing strife, violence, political instability, and poverty, the absence of a robust security screening apparatus is a vulnerability which malafide actors have exploited, as underscored by the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris. A central feature of this CTWG event was an examination of European Union (EU) and NATO efforts to deal with the multifaceted complexities that drive flows of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers while also addressing new and emerging terrorist challenges and threats. NATO and European states have taken some initial, concrete steps to deter violent extremists from using migratory routes to enter the EU, such as: increased border security and checks; enhanced naval and surveillance operations; construction of border fences along Europe's eastern frontier; strengthened screening and recording of migrant and refugee registrations; and stationing NATO ships in the Aegean. However, these actions require additional policy decisions, resources, and enhanced collaboration to address both humanitarian and security concerns.

More than forty practitioners and researchers from twenty countries gathered by invitation of the Partnership for Peace Consortium's (PfPC) Combating Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) at the George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany June 1-3, 2016. Entitled "Migration Crisis: Security Challenges and Policy Recommendations," the event explored issues related to the ongoing migration crisis, including NATO's initial response and potential future counterterrorism and security-related efforts in support of European countries and EU efforts. In addition to three keynote addresses and a panel discussion, the PfPC-CTWG utilized a whole-of-society approach in a multinational tabletop exercise (TTX) to explore collective security concepts such as broadened partnership efforts, emboldened national and local strategies, enhanced information-sharing, and strengthened border security. The outcomes included the elaboration of a comprehensive set of policy recommendations in advance of the NATO Warsaw Summit (July 7-9, 2016), and the development of a detailed TTX model and methodology that is currently available to be exported to partners upon request and within available resources.

Migration Crisis: Analytical Overview

Sustained political upheaval in North Africa and the Middle East has triggered the surge of irregular border-crossings into Europe for several years. In 2011, thousands of Tunisians began to arrive on the Italian island, Lampedusa, following the onset of the Arab Spring. From 2011, following the unrest in the post-Qaddafi era, sub-Saharan Africans who had previously migrated to Libya, began to travel to Europe. The Syrian civil war has escalated into a brutal proxy war and displaced over 7 million Syrians inside Syria and over 4.8 million refugees to neighboring countries including Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt. In 2014 and 2015, Syrians, along with Iraqis, Afghans, and Pakistanis, among other nationalities, started

taking the irregular journey across the Aegean from Turkey to Greece. In 2015, over 850,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean to Greece and over 150,000 arrived via the Central Mediterranean, mostly from Libya to Italy. These large irregular crossings have challenged the ability of individual European countries as well as the EU to not only provide emergency humanitarian assistance but also supply long-term solutions. The absence of capacity to manage the flow has also opened security vulnerabilities that threat actors have exploited. Since the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, there have been urgent calls for concerted action at an international level.

A series of security factors, such as multiple entry points (some of which are unpatrolled), difficulty in verifying the identities and nationalities of individuals with little or no documentation, and capacity challenges posed by the sheer magnitude of arrivals have made Europe's external borders vulnerable. These resultant vulnerabilities have profoundly changed the framework in which militant Islamists operate. Terrorists have effectively exploited the situation on Europe's southern borders allowing them, on a few instances, to enter the EU undetected. Public reporting has pointed out that a few known or suspected terrorists made their way into Europe by exploiting migrant routes. Furthermore, as pressure on Da'esh's self-proclaimed *Khalifa* grows, foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), either as a result of being ordered to depart or simply to avoid growing risks, are deciding to leave conflict zones either for their home countries or other destinations. The return of FTFs, masquerading as migrants, has become a major concern, as highlighted by the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. According to current reports, the security stakes are raised as these individuals appear to be attack planners and facilitators whose operational expertise presents a more urgent threat than lone-wolf attackers.

Facilitating Factors

- *Continued violence and instability in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan is fueling mass displacement:* As noted earlier, the complex level of violence crippling the region fuels the migrant and refugee crisis.
- *Proxy war complications:* Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah's support of the Alawite-led government of President Bashar al-Assad. The Russian military campaign in Syria ran for almost 6 months, from September 2015 to March 2016, and allowed Assad regime forces to retake lost ground. Russia carried out repeated airstrikes on targeted hospitals, schools, and mosques – exacerbating the war and increasing the number of displaced individuals.
- *Geopolitical changes have closed off alternative destinations:* Libya's inability to rebuild state institutions amid rising violence in the post-Qaddafi era has resulted in a half a million Libyans being displaced. Taking advantage of political instability, Da'esh managed to establish a foothold in 2015.
- *Deteriorating conditions in Jordan and Lebanon:* The influx of refugees from Syria has strained the already weakened political and economic infrastructure in these countries. Sectarian divisions in Lebanon have been exploited by Hezbollah's battles with Da'esh restricting refugee access to the country and impeding humanitarian assistance to those already there.
- *The success of Syrian refugees and other migrants in reaching Europe encouraged others who face economic hardship, political repression, or conflict situations to attempt to follow similar routes.*
- *Inability of policymakers and EU leaders to arrive at a coordinated response:* The sheer number of migrants coupled with lengthy legal processes, uncoordinated responses, and political disagreements presents additional hurdles for European and NATO policymakers.
- *Humanitarian efforts are significantly under-resourced:* Agencies and relief efforts are unable to effectively address the needs of displaced populations.
- *Sophisticated smuggling and criminal networks present a looming challenge:* Nefarious irregular migration facilitators have reportedly generated annual revenues of roughly \$6 billion, which challenges the ability of individual countries to respond appropriately and effectively.

Current Responses

Turkey-EU Joint Action Plan: On March 18, the EU and Turkey agreed on a Joint Action Plan designed to open safe and legal routes to the EU for Syrian refugees while reducing dangerous and irregular migration. Under the plan, which came into effect on March 20, the EU and Turkey agreed to return all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016; resettle one Syrian to EU member states for every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands; take measures to prevent new sea or land routes for irregular migration opening from Turkey to the EU; activate a voluntary humanitarian admission scheme once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU have been substantially reduced; accelerate fulfillment of the visa liberalization roadmap with a view to lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016; speed up disbursement of the initially allocated €3 billion under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey; open one new non-controversial EU accession chapter; and improve humanitarian conditions inside Syria.

The European Union: The EU has contributed over €500 million in response since the beginning of the crisis. Efforts include establishing “hot spots” in Greece and Italy to facilitate migrant processing and taking the lead in combating the criminal elements by investigating, disrupting, and prosecuting smugglers networks who exploit the crisis. In May 2015, the EU introduced an emergency plan to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to other EU member states. However, as of March 2016, only 660 migrants have been relocated under the process.

NATO: The February 2016 Defence Ministers meeting in Brussels resulted in NATO’s Security General Jens Stoltenberg making a number of pledges, marking the security alliance’s first intervention in Europe’s migration crisis. These pledges include the stationing of additional NATO forces in the Aegean to support international efforts to stem trafficking and migration, and increased reconnaissance, surveillance and monitoring missions along the Turkish-Syrian border. NATO has additionally stated its commitment to assisting and facilitating intelligence-sharing between Greece and Turkey, and ensuring stability in both Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the broader approach to the refugee problem.

Presentation Summaries

The conference opened with an introduction by CTWG Co-Chair Mr. Richard Prosen from the U.S. Department of State, who both outlined categories for policy responses (e.g., good governance, data-sharing, border security, public-private partnerships, and effective counter-narratives) and called upon NATO to take action at the upcoming Warsaw Summit to further its collective actions in fighting terrorism espoused at the Wales Summit while also integrating proposals to help address security challenges related to the migrant crisis. Mr. Prosen advocated for NATO Allies to develop and implement national “WatchListing” policies while utilizing relevant NATO Standardization Agreements (STANAGs), in particular STANAG 4715: Biometrics Data, Interchange, WatchListing, and Reporting, and STANAG 6515: Countering Threat Anonymity, as foundations for interagency and international collaboration. The keynote presentations on “Contemporary Threats and Challenges to International Security” were introduced by Dr. Peter Forster from The Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Forster framed the crisis as having political, socio-economic, humanitarian, and security dimensions. While underlining the importance of proactive country responses to the humanitarian needs of those seeking protection in Europe, he discussed the complexity of the various challenges posed by the sheer numbers and the convergence of threats from trafficking, exploitation, and other criminal activity. He also discussed the evolving threat from Da’esh as it faces territorial pressures in Iraq and Syria and concluded by outlining three challenges: screening processes, information-sharing, and public-private partnerships

to help differentiate potential threats from those legitimately seeking international protection.

Ms. Elizabeth Collett, from the Migration Policy Institute, characterized the migration crisis not as a single phenomenon but as a cascading global crisis that is moving closer to Europe and has been exacerbated by a “just-in-time” mismanaged approach. She proposed investing in immigration and humanitarian policies (e.g., shelter, food, and information) that are integrated into foreign policy and stressed early and forward-leaning interventions in vulnerable areas. She suggested that a comprehensive assessment and balancing of short- and long-term measures needed to address the “grey middle” (i.e., the unaccompanied minors and those without legitimate reasons to stay). Dr. Sajjan Gohel from the Asia-Pacific Foundation provided an overview of the FTF threat within the context of the migrant issue, including a description of gaps in the existing security network. He emphasized the importance of understanding not only what must be monitored when trying to detect terrorists, but also what information can and should be shared, while noting that deeper analysis is needed to understand the networks that support terrorist movements within migrant routes. These challenges may be partially answered by real-time information sharing, integrated databases, enhanced watchlists, and better monitoring of criminal networks, but to be effective such actions require understanding the context of the problem.

A diverse CTWG panel of five speakers addressing “Diffuse Threats and Comprehensive Responses” provided an overview of NATO, the EU, and related regional and national efforts; discussed immigration, border management, and data-sharing priorities; and outlined stability, resilience, and policy responses. Mr. Francois Perrenoud outlined INTERPOL’s toolset, including the Stolen and Lost Travel Document (SLTD) database and digitized FTF records. Mr. Alan Lyon, the UK’s National PREVENT Coordinator, concentrated on the need for cooperation and trust among government agencies and between agencies and local communities. He also discussed the changing demographics of those leaving to join Da’esh which presents new challenges upon return and noted the importance of developing effective counter-narrative approaches. Ultimately, a concerted effort is needed to combat the institutions that promote and support radicalization to violence. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Forensics and Biometrics Agency representative Mr. Gerald Reimers touted the value of biometrics data in improving security for threat and fraud detection and prevention. More critically, he suggested improved sharing of unclassified military biometrics data and database integration, interagency collaboration, and the implementation of a biometrics-informed “forward operating base” model *ala* Afghanistan as a means of extending security measures to refugee camps. Dr. Sander Lleshi from Albania’s Office of the Prime Minister advocated for a proactive exportation of European values rather than a reactive policy of receive and manage. Dr. Edit Schlaffer from the Vienna-based NGO, Women without Borders, concluded the session by focusing on trust, protecting the vulnerable, and on one of the most salient points of the conference – the problem of cascading radicalization, or the promotion of extremism in migrants in Europe. Paramount to addressing these challenges is providing support to vulnerable populations, including women and children, and engaging credible “formers” as active participants in opposing radicalization to violence. It was generally agreed that security measures should not be taken contrary to national legal obligations and commitments to international humanitarian conventions and agreements.

Tabletop Exercise (TTX) – Migration Crisis: Quo Vadis for the International Community

These event’s opening presentations and themes informed the subsequent “*Migration Crisis: Quo Vadis for the International Community*” TTX, which included a three-part hypothetical scenario derived from actual cases that was analyzed in an interactive, moderated “whole of society” discussion format. The

detailed, multifaceted scenario illuminated many CT-related challenges associated with the crisis to stimulate the development of actionable policy responses while helping assess current challenges, identify areas for collaboration, and reflect international, national, and local best practice.

Day one of the TTX featured two sessions facilitated by Mr. Irfan Saeed, Director of the Office of Countering Violent Extremism at the U.S. Department of State. The first session focused on background information and discussed prevention options and considerations. The second session engaged participants in opportunities for intervention. Participants included representatives from the diplomatic, policy, military, civil society, academia, intelligence, and law enforcement communities. TTX participants developed innovative solutions in the areas of strategic communications, policy recommendations, and program development to address CT issues from broad perspectives, ranging from community resilience efforts and inter-faith dialogue to law enforcement measures and defense initiatives. On the second day, Mr. Prosen, Dr. Gohel, and Dr. Forster jointly facilitated the third session, the mitigation portion of the TTX. Discussions were held under Chatham House rules and a series of detailed policy recommendations and lessons learned were compiled and codified for presentation.

The conference concluded with a brief overview of the CTWG's recent accomplishments and future directions, including a forthcoming TTX in Tirana, Albania, in September 2016 and a review of developments related to the CTWG's CT Reference Curriculum project.

Consolidated List of Migration Crisis Policy Recommendations

Given the diverse group of participants approaching the migrant issue from different perspectives and experiences, the policy recommendations and lessons learned developed in the course of the TTX were both robust and varied. To reflect the assorted proposals while maintaining the TTX's structure, recommendations presented below are grouped into categories listed as general or pertain to one of the three TTX working sessions (i.e., prevention, intervention, and mitigation).

General Recommendations

1. Amplify the international community's (e.g., NATO, the EU, and beyond) collaborative role to better detect and prevent FTF travel, enhance counterterrorism interdiction, and identify and counter criminal activities and organizations, particularly those that foster smuggling and trafficking.
2. Forge consensus on agreement that robust security screening is complementary and compatible with a humane approach to the challenges posed by the migration crisis, including ensuring that countries meet their humanitarian obligations under refugee conventions and legislation.
3. Leverage the migrant crisis to build institutional familiarity and trust to better respond to future crises, including targeted public messaging and enhanced humanitarian/security measures.
4. NATO and NATO Allies should:
 - a. Promote information-sharing, as appropriate, via optimized use of multilateral platforms such as NATO's Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System (BICES), and by supporting the development and implementation of interoperability standards for databases;
 - b. Share biometric information to enhance joint civilian-military efforts, exchange information on returning FTFs, and help address threats and challenges to the Alliance;
 - c. Complement and contribute to civilian efforts to enhance identity management and security screening of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees while ensuring that threat actors do not further exploit the current crisis to facilitate the travel of known or suspected terrorists to Europe and North America;
 - d. Develop and implement national WatchListing policies, programs and standards;

- e. Implement fully relevant Standardization Agreements (STANAGs), in particular STANAG 4715: Biometrics Data, Interchange, WatchListing, and Reporting, and STANAG 6515: Countering Threat Anonymity);
 - f. Promote EU and European initiatives to strengthen and standardize the sharing of information across civilian national and multilateral digital platforms; and
 - g. Provide a forum, facilitated by NATO, for reconciling differing opinions regarding real or perceived national threats resulting from the crisis, such as the Turkish concerns with the PKK, to seek unity and better cooperation among EU countries.
5. Understand and develop responses to the broader implications of the migrant crisis:
 - a. Economic and political strain on countries in regard to the cost of absorbing refugees and enhanced border protection
 - b. Erosion of counterterrorism capabilities beyond Europe (e.g., French state of emergency eroding its ability to deploy forces to conflict zones such as Mali)
 - c. Assistance to countries that do not have 'standard/modern' equipment to vet and register migrants efficiently
 - d. Increased regulation of financing, based on documented need, from [UN/EU/NATO] to countries/borders dealing with large swaths of migrants.
 6. Develop structured intelligence capabilities that embrace a more holistic approach to improve coordination against human trafficking and criminal enterprises that benefit from the crisis and attempt to differentiate between the vulnerable, the "gray area" refugee, and potential criminals.
 7. Improve intelligence sharing including the continued development of a comprehensive searchable database for FTFs which includes broader participation among states contributing information and enhanced information sharing on actions conducted overseas.
 8. Use predicative analytics to improve a risk-based approach to identify high risk border crossing areas (i.e., location and frequency).
 9. Protect the vulnerable by ensuring adequate safe-spaces, develop and implement "hot line" guidelines and programs through improved coordination among national and international NGOs.
 10. Recognize that the narrative emanating from extremists is a significantly negative "force multiplier" when targeted at vulnerable populations.
 11. Create effective positive narrative or counter-narrative campaigns that empower mothers by teaching them to lead meaningful discussions both face-to-face (offline) and via technology (online).
 12. Encourage greater NGO integration in a wide range of CT/CVE efforts as a force multiplier.

Prevention Recommendations

1. Develop a strategic action plan that identifies the problem, frames the problem, and outlines steps for remediation. To be successful, this practice might implement an activity-based intelligence process that includes community and government leaders to gather information via interviews and screening of migrants, fusing this information with biometric enrollment and collection, and conducting field research to offer context with regard to culture, trends, and intentions of new arrivals.
2. Establish a goal of security for all citizens that fosters interagency cooperation but ensures the procedures, consistent with international humanitarian laws and rights, and that offers adequate screening tools, measurements, and processes.
3. Develop a localized targeted response by fostering engagement between communities and governments. Such approaches might include:
 - a. Community policing to ensure that equitable application laws protect all citizens;
 - b. Improved awareness among health and social services to enable them to mitigate illnesses and diseases;

- c. Community programs for societal integration, such as institutionalized family mentoring programs; and
 - d. Programs that promote the integration of refugees and other migrants by teaching local languages and providing education about national cultures.
4. Promote useful and viable public-private partnerships
 - a. Change the perspective of the private sector to view the migrant community as a business opportunity (e.g., labor or market) and establish opportunities for partnership that facilitates these goals;
 - b. Need to incentivize the private sector to form partnerships, either with government or other organizations, to promote a different perspective of the migrant community;
 - c. Develop a “whole-of-society” approach that promotes effective integration of migrants and refugees;
 - d. Establish viable counter-narrative through a strategic process that is based on analysis of the targeted audience, understands message dissemination, and engages credible voices to create a dialogue for discouragement; and
 - e. Empower formal and informal local leadership, including inter-faith and credible voices, to reach out and provide viable alternatives to radicalization and violent radicalization.

Intervention Recommendations

1. Promote a comprehensive counterterrorism policy that integrates military action, combating FTFs, counter-financing, counter-narrative, and socio-economic development.
2. Encourage countries to adopt international ICAO standards and regulations for travel;
3. Create opportunities for secure exit programs that are both proactive and reactive.
4. Enhance border security and control management through training, exercises with evaluation, and the mobilization of other frontline staff (e.g., military and police) to augment capacity challenges.
5. Encourage improved information sharing at all levels (e.g., local, regional, national, and international) that includes the sharing of biometric data, promotes consistency in methods for identifying threats, and improves the identification techniques.
6. Establish channels in the EU and NATO that accept and protect “whistleblowing” relating to suspicious individuals, particularly when immediate intervention is needed.
7. Promote useful and viable public-private partnerships
 - a. Encourage government and private sector cooperation in the area of telecommunications to ensure timely and accurate terms of reference; and
 - b. Engage with the private sector to understand the marketing avenues (e.g., popular tags, pertinent technologies, and consistent messages from credible sources) for effective counter-narratives.

Mitigation Recommendations

1. Promote enhanced interagency cooperation including intelligence and security services to improve information sharing on border control, law enforcement, and security issues.
2. Implement a layered security approach to counterterrorism that mitigates the risk of attack including:
 - a. The development of government-run networks to discover known and suspected terrorists and returning FTFs;
 - b. Rigorous background checks of staff;
 - c. Monitoring and preventing counterterrorist recruitment measures and techniques, both online and offline, consistent with national legislation and international humanitarian law;

- d. Developing and employing a task force crisis response plans for a range of potential attacks, including pre- and post-scenario education, training, exercise, and evaluation approaches; and
 - e. Establishing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) protocols and providing comprehensive first responders training and sufficient resources.
3. Establish hotlines to ensure people are able to reach out when concerned about individuals who may pose a threat.
 4. Develop a clear message on, and enforce the legal consequences of, engaging with terrorist organizations and those who support known or suspected terrorists.
 5. Promote vigilance within sports organizations such as football clubs to raise awareness among fans about recognizing suspicious individuals or behavior during sports events and report concerns to security immediately.
 6. Engage with media (e.g., television, radio, internet, and print) to encourage non-divisive reporting on migration issues and extremism and promote robust and sustained counter-narratives about Da'esh rather than assume audiences support government actions de facto.
 7. Review, challenge, and refer to media regulators content that promotes radicalization in specific languages for specific communities when necessary.
 8. Promote Public-Private Partnerships that focus on engaging the private sector to:
 - a. Build a multiagency approach among schools, communities, NGOs, social services, and the police to create an environment of trust;
 - b. Promote the formation of an open-door policy within educational facilities so people are able to feel safe in voicing concerns;
 - c. Collaborate with humanitarian agencies and NGOs within refugee camps to identify potential terrorist recruitment elements;
 - d. Encourage women to engage with credible local and international CVE NGOs (such as Women Without Borders);
 - e. Raise awareness that radicalization to violence can happen to any family; articulate a message of hope and promote development of support networks;
 - f. Promote victim resilience as part of an overall counter-narrative campaign, including development of young survivors' networks within schools (peer-level engagement); and
 - g. Develop adequate counselling and support services for youth and vulnerable communities.

Promoting Future Partnerships & International Collaboration

The CTWG has developed a series of TTXs for use in defense curricula that feature moderated discussions and role plays to help participants devise effective strategies, formulate recommendations, and develop relevant responses. The scenarios are based on ground truth and tailored for local context and examine emerging terrorism trends and pressing international security issues. The TTX model and methodologies have been tested and evaluated, and are envisaged to be included in a CT Reference Curriculum. CTWG TTX training modules are available to be exported to partners upon request and within available resources.

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