

INTELLIGENCE AND MIGRATION

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***Abstract:** As an intelligence practitioner, it has been my experience that migration has very different implications for different factors of decision-making factors: it can bring significant advantages from an economic and social point of view, it can be a humanitarian necessity, as well as an obligation to comply with the most basic human rights, but migration on a big scale is also a serious security concern, with potential of generating acute regional instability and insecurity. And those effects have significant impact on both target, and transit countries. Alongside other relevant institutions, intelligence too has a significant role in detecting threats associated with migratory waves, regardless if they consist of refugees or economic migrants. The highest risk is, of course, that of terrorism suspects infiltrating both afore-mentioned legitimate categories, while another hot topic related to this phenomenon is still the foreign fighters/ returnees problem. On one side, there is the thorny question of identifying potential terrorism suspects among millions of people, some fleeing war and inhumane living conditions. And this risk cannot be managed by any single authority alone. It takes close cooperation among local integration authorities, law enforcement and border control representatives, and intelligence agencies. There is also an acute need for further regional cooperation, but also of cooperation with other countries, some adherent to radically different ideologies, which poses several questions, varying from the protection of secrecy, to professional intelligence ethics. Fact is, only a joint effort can generate early warning and the implementation of adequate prevention and countering measures for all kinds of risks and threats related to this complex phenomenon of migration. And, in this regard, one of the most difficult issues we are facing is detecting a person's actual identity, while a fake identity isn't necessarily a signal for a hidden, dangerous agenda. There are also other issues at stake, weighting in on intelligence: the incumbent risks of refugee camps, starting with rioting, altercations with local authorities, and involvement of organized crime networks. Organized crime in Serbia and Macedonia, for example, has been facilitating illegal migrant traffic towards Western Europe for the past four years, becoming a serious concern for European intelligence. Other potential threats stem from the fact that some organizations claiming to help refugees in Greece and Turkey were reported to be actually run by Islamic groups connected to terrorist organizations. And there are also other adverse effects in the host societies which are in intelligence's purview: the reactivation of far right ideas and groups, such as nationalist and supremacist groups with a potentially violent behavior. Intelligence is just a piece of the puzzle in dealing with the phenomenon, but it also has its limitations and needs to enhance its capacity in order to limit risks and threats. Those are some of the premises of a tense relation between migrants and intelligence, which I believe is worth further exploration.*

Keywords: migration; intelligence; cooperation

1. GENERAL CONTEXT

In Europe, migration only became a troublesome phenomenon in the past few years; it was, after World War II and before the waves of Syrian refugees, a manageable, natural and even necessary process, helping aged Western countries ensure the workforce and population growth much needed for economic purposes. Migrants were needed and generally accepted, with a well established due process allowing them admission, integration and work in the receiving societies, migration a basic human right.

And maybe one of the factors for this tolerance to a lower-scale phenomenon was the very fact that Europe had, for several centuries, been a continent of majoritary indigenous populations, with strong values and a culture of its own, difficult to tip by foreign influences. Migrants were mostly of European descent, but intent on finding better living and working conditions or fleeing conflict elsewhere on the continent. It was rather the foreigners that were assimilated into the mainstream. Until well after the Second World War, Europe had also been the place of origin for migrants going throughout the world, from the Americas to Africa or Australia.

But this would make us expect other nations, providentially formed by immigrants, the most relevant example being the United States of America, to be more welcoming with both economic migrants and war and political refugees, given their former status of “melting pot” accepting of all nationalities and ethnicities, tolerant of all values and cultures and welcoming for all outsiders. On the contrary, the current policy in the US seems to blame migration for all that goes wrong with the American society, from crime rates to lack of jobs, stress on the health and social insurance systems etc. The need for a border wall, intensely advocated by American President Trump, rests on a pretended necessity to limit migration to the US and an underlying association of the migratory phenomenon with terrorism.

What has changed, then? Why have Western democracies become increasingly preoccupied with migration, why does it generate misunderstandings among EU Member States and division in societies, changes of policies, and even social unrest?

a. **Numbers.** On the one side, there is, of course, the sheer number of migrants: the number of asylum seekers in Europe doubled from 2014 to 2015¹, while most efforts for addressing asylum requests were undertaken by poorer members at the EU borders, since they are the first entry points.

And I think one of the main reason the migratory wave in the last years has put so much pressure on the EU’s cohesion is the very fact that it brought the greatest responsibility to the poorest countries in the Union, which needed to rapidly enhance their processing capabilities for asylum seekers and migrants – but on their own limited resources –, keep them from going further to their destination countries unchecked, while, at the same time, respecting all basic human rights and ensuring optimal living standards for a fair number of people.

The basis for dealing with the phenomenon, the Dublin III Regulation, proved a less than adequate framework for such a crisis, actually putting pressure on the entry-point countries, which are compelled to examine all asylum requests themselves. Moreover, any asylum seeker who filed a request at an entry-point country and was afterwards moved to another one shall, according to the Regulation’s provisions, be returned for processing in the entry country. As a result, Greece

and Italy were heavily affected during the peak of the crisis, while Hungary chose to stop receiving back initial applicants. Some solidarity did show at EU level, when countries such as Germany, Norway or the Czech Republic offered to help processing requests filed elsewhere, particularly for Syrian refugees.

b. **Terrorism anxiety.** On the other side, what is new in the past decade is that, of all asylum seekers coming to the EU, in 2016, for example, 29% were Syrian, 14% – Afghani, and 10% Iraqi, leaving other nationalities in the one-digit percentile. This means completely different values, different lifestyles, but with high expectations from what this area of welfare and peace ought to offer.

This also resulted in some countries of the top 10 being impacted by terrorism worldwide.

It is also not a surprise that, during this violent migratory wave which hit Europe from the Middle East and North Africa in 2015, the majority of asylum seekers were Muslims, and all this in the hectic aftermath of 9/11 and the war on terror, of the decline of Al Qaeda and emergence of DAESH.

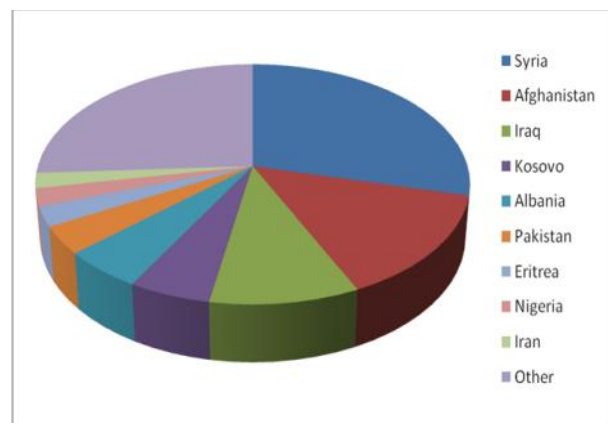


Fig. 1. Asylum seekers in the EU, 2015; source: EUROSTAT

And although it is not fair to place an anathema on asylum seekers and migrants, due to the general state of insecurity generated by Islamic terrorism, Western democracies had to implement additional measures and have a more acute sense of responsibility for protecting their citizens. Terrorism brought about a more fragile national and local/regional security, as well as further pressure on authorities to prevent other attacks. And, in terms of national security, keeping the balance between protecting one’s own citizens and those of other states is sometimes – as within this case – difficult to do.

The interests of local citizens tend to take precedence over those of other states’, and reflections

¹ According to Eurostat news release 44/2016, March 4, 2016 – *Asylum in the EU Member States*, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6>, accessed March 19th, 2019.

of the past tend to blur the present, particularly when terrorist attacks are what comes to mind.

c. **Organized crime.** The last but not least of the aspects putting pressure on the West is a familiar side-effect of migration: the appearance of organized, transnational crime, criminal networks set up in order to get rich, facilitating the foreigners' transition to their target countries. On the one side, there is no need to further invoke the number of situations in which immigration networks have led people to their death in the attempt to smuggle them towards destination. On the other side, the same transit routes can and are used for further crimes, such as drug or weapons trafficking.

2. INTELLIGENCE AS A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

This being the general picture, it is important to see what are the responsible actors in the process, which can facilitate both observation of basic human rights for migrants and asylum seekers, and security and stability for all other parties involved, from entry-point countries to transit ones, and to destination states.

Intelligence is obviously not the central piece in the mechanism of screening migrants or refugees, since most countries have migration authorities responsible for the phenomenon, but intelligence is, nonetheless, just as relevant as any other authority for the process, because it can provide real-time information about potential threats.

Processing requests, on the one side, and preventing migrant trafficking and illegal migration, on the other, is a matter of a joint effort, on several layers. First, there is the need for domestic cooperation among all pertinent authorities. The entire chain, from well prepared immigration officers, able to act as sensors and first response, to well adjusted law enforcement, with all material means to verify requests and counter trafficking, to pro-active and well-informed intelligence, and a prepared social system, apt to ensure optimal living conditions during requests processing, can have no weak link.

On the other side, local authorities cannot prevent and counter ensuing risks and threats without wider cooperation at regional and global level. There is a need of permanent consultation with other states, transnational organizations, and even with the migrants' countries of origin, for example in order to correctly identify applicants. International data bases, valuable information from other organisms, as well as input from the intelligence are indispensable tools for keeping our

countries and the migrating populations safe. For example, the Passenger Name Record (PNR), a vast data base keeping track of all travel information collected by airlines, is a good tool for detecting foreign fighters and returnees which could be posing as immigrants. This particular system was, nonetheless, subject to misunderstandings between the EU and the US, for example, due to differences in processing and securing personal data.

As mentioned, the operative situation can sometimes refer domestic authorities to those in the migrant's country of origin, which also raises particular ethical questions since, in many cases, those countries are far from being democratic ones, acting upon a completely different set of values than ours. It is, for example, possible to conceive that a foreign intelligence agency in an autocratic country could perceive an opponent of the authorities in power as a terrorist and inform partners in democratic states as such, which only makes the vetting process more difficult.

3. COOPERATION FORMATS

a. **Intelligence cooperation.** Extensive cooperation in intelligence has developed largely because of the terrorist phenomena, in the post 9/11 era. It is difficult for any institution working with secret information, as well as with secret means and methods, to agree to divulge some of its trade secrets, sometimes for the exclusive benefit of a partner. And partnerships and interests may still be divergent under some aspects, therefore making cooperation even more difficult.

But, as it is the case, for example, with the INTERPOL SIENA exchange platform at EU level, intelligence worldwide has slowly but surely agreed to cooperate, even with partners in countries which do not share similar values, in order to reduce the terrorist threat.

With regard to intelligence cooperation, a significant component is, obviously, bilateral cooperation, on which most intelligence agencies rely.

But, most importantly, there are several multilateral intelligence cooperation formats. Their role is, on the one side, to enhance information exchange within dedicated platforms, which obviously has high operational value, but also to share expertise and lessons learnt, common training enterprises etc. These "non-transparent formats"² at European level are:

² Dubbed as such by Matthias Monroy, for an alleged lack of accountability, for example in <https://digit.site36.net/2018/12/04/how-european-secret-services-organise->

- *The Berne Club*, oldest among existing cooperation formats, said to have been established in 1969 by heads of Western European intelligence agencies;

- The *Counter Terrorism Group*, founded by the Berne Club shortly after the 9/11 attacks, aiming at exchanging Intel and discussing incidents and required or implemented measures; it has an operational platform in Hague;

- The *Paris Group*, established in 2016 as a reaction to EU terrorist attacks and including 15 countries;

- *SIGINT Seniors Europe* is a cooperation format for Signals Intelligence agencies, led by US NSA and established, initially, in 1982 with the purpose of exchanging Intel on the Soviet Union; it is particularly useful in exchanging intelligence, because it has its own communication system, called SIGDASYS;

- *INTCEN*, the civilian intelligence analysis center under the European External Action Service, responsible for assessing intelligence submitted by Member States' agencies, and working with *EUROPOL* for joint analysis, conclusions, and orientations;

- *EUMS INT Directorate* – a structure similar to *INTCEN*, but a military structure within the EU Military Staff Intelligence Directorate.

Regional cooperation formats are also worth mentioning, because they are sometimes more focused on a general picture all participants have a better understanding of and on more acute common problems; regional intelligence initiatives such as the *Middle Europe Conference – MEC* and the *South Eastern Europe Intelligence Conference – SEEIC* have done much in the way of countering common threats.

b. Inter-agency cooperation. Intelligence agencies do, however, cooperate in other formats and with other organisms, too, in order to contribute to the most of their capabilities to the vetting process, as well as to the prevention and countering of illegal migration and of various side-effects it can have.

Out of the European cooperation formats, one that raises high hopes in the fight against terrorism is the European Counter Terrorism Center – *ECTC*, an organism of the *EUROPOL* which collaborates with the European Migrant Smuggling Centre, as well as with other institutions such as the *INTERPOL* or *EUROJUST*.

ECTC works within the framework of Analysis Projects, in which intelligence is collected and assembled by teams of analysts and experts. The exchange of information among *INTERPOL* and Member States is done through the *SIENA* system (Secure Information Exchange Network Application), accessible on a cooperation-agreement basis for any local CT organism. The system also allows participating authorities to exchange Intel among themselves, with or without involving the *EUROPOL*. It is operational in 95% of EU Member States, including a total of 46 CT authorities.

With *NATO*, CT cooperation is operational through the *Emerging Security Challenge Division – ESCO*, established in 2010 in order to tackle emerging threats such as terrorism and cybercrime, as well as nuclear policy, energy security or non-proliferation.

At EU level, the Justice and Home Affairs includes a working group on terrorism, *The Working Party on Terrorism – TWP*, involved in intelligence exchange, countering radicalization and recruitment, and reviewing EU members' best practices.

The *Security Directorate* of the European Commission is also responsible for countering terrorism, alongside other responsibilities.

The *EURODAC* initiative, supported by law enforcement throughout the EU, is also essential since it provides an extensive fingerprint database, but needs considerable improvement through addition of personal data as well as data about the judicial record of the migrants.

4. AN OVERVIEW OF THE BIG PICTURE FROM AN INTELLIGENCE PERSPECTIVE

a. The terrorist threat. Europe's greatest concern regarding the current migration wave is about the disruptive potential foreign fighter returnees have for their domestic security; in this regard, however, we are mainly speaking of nationals of the respective countries, returning from their host-countries even more radicalized and often as 'sleepers', waiting for the right time to act.

Although the number of EU foreign fighters and returnees is reportedly decreasing³, countries with significant numbers of foreign fighters who left to support *DAESH* are expected to return through migration channels in origin countries such as Germany, France, Belgium or even Hungary.

As of 2018, available data from Austria show that several persons seeking migrant or refugee status

themselves-in-groups-and-clubs/, [accessed March 20th, 2019].

³ According to the *ECTC's* *TESAT* as of 2018.

raised severe suspicions of being DAESH members and were, therefore, arrested, while countries such as Greece and Italy did not identify such potential threats, but neither can they rule them out. The official numbers are not readily available and don't seem high, but it is obviously not necessary for the migration flows to be used systematically to infiltrate terrorists in order to provoke a great deal of harm. But, even with data on the topic being scarce, the EU undertook several measures to reduce such possibility, among which the most prominent consist of stricter border controls.

FRONTEX has improved its surveillance capabilities and has enhanced data-exchange, particularly with the Libyan coast guard, with discussions ongoing in order to allow Libyan authorities access to the "Seahorse Mediterranean" database. FRONTEX has applied new regulations as of the end of 2014, has instituted the EUROSUR system of monitoring frontiers by means of satellites and drones, and has launched a Multi-purpose Aerial Surveillance/ MAS program.

But despite all the technical advances which can provide better protection, the issue of falsified or stolen travel documents seems to remain the most difficult problem to tackle.

INTERPOL also acted by sending rotating teams of 50 guest officers to Italy and Greece, at entry points of migratory flows, in order to help with security checks and pinpoint terrorism and crime suspects. An extensive recruitment effort is also underway, in order to bring 200 more officers ready for deployment in sensitive migration spots.

Terrorist infiltration amongst legitimate migrants is still a central concern for intelligence, alongside the potential of radicalization and violence in large groups, especially in the context of reduced processing capabilities. Serious threats were uttered by DAESH members in 2014, for example, when they threatened to flood Europe with refugees and send 4 000 jihadists to Turkey.

Case Study – Paris, November 13, 2015.

Perhaps the most famous case of terrorist attackers exploiting the weaknesses of an imperfect migration and border control system was that of the November 13, 2015 Stade de France attackers. France is a particularly appealing target for terrorism, because of several reasons:

- i. it is a symbol of Western culture and democracy, point of origin for values such as Revolutionary Liberty, Fraternity, Equality;
- ii. it is involved in Africa with predominantly Muslim countries, where it has economic and military interests;

- iii. it has a secular tradition and has implemented controversial measures forbidding, for example, religious markers in public places, which generates discontent among some traditional Muslims;

- iv. it has an estranged, isolated and poor second or third generation migrants, becoming frustrated, vulnerable and eventually radicalized;

- v. it has the highest number of foreign fighters and returnees of all European fighters, with estimations of approximately 1,700 persons fighting in Syria and Iraq⁴.

At the end of 2015, one of the Paris attackers, an Algerian, was arrested in a refugee camp in Salzburg, after having previously been arrested and released in Greece, for failing to pass a passport check. Two of the perpetrators seem to have entered Europe with false Syrian passports.

There was, obviously, not enough information shared in this case, since he was caught and released, and eventually allowed to participate in a severe attack. He seems to have been part of a group of jihadists that trained with DAESH in Syria.

Although tough measures were taken in France, with an impact on regular citizen's lives, they were barely effective. Only in 2017 have French lawmakers also strengthened counter-terrorist legislation, allowing, among others, for the Office of the Public Prosecutor and particular Judges (of the Counter-Terrorism Section) to communicate to intelligence agencies parts of the terrorism juridical procedures.

On the other side, there is also a probability that terrorist attacks could be perpetrated in order to compromise specific refugees groups, such as those coming from Syria, in order to provoke more radical measures by EU Members States, directed at them⁵.

Radicalization and extremism amongst migrants, in refugee's camps and centers is a serious risk, too. Camps become small-scale societies, with their own mosques and imams, some preaching jihadist concepts and even sending youngsters to fight for DAESH⁶.

⁴ Schmidt, A. <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Alex-P.-Schmid-Links-between-Terrorism-and-Migration-1.pdf>, accessed March 22nd, 2019.

⁵ EUROPOL Report *Changes in Modus Operandi of Islamic State Revisited*, at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/changes-in-modus-operandi-of-islamic-state-revisited>, accessed March 22nd, 2019.

⁶ S. Schmidt quotes an interview with a DAESH defector, stating that the Turkish refugees camp at Akcakale has imams recruiting for ISIS, and that after the Kobani battle, several of the dead fighters had on them IDs from this particular refugee camp.

A 16-years old Syrian boy was arrested, in 2016, in Cologne, for owning materials adequate for the fabrication of an improvised explosive device, with the aim of perpetrating an attack. German authorities discovered his online discussions with DAESH members, as part of his radicalization process.

Lebanon currently has almost a quarter of its population made up by Syrian refugees, while in 2016, its Prime Minister assessed over 20,000 jihadists are in local refugees camps.

There are also situations in which refugee camps became places of violent extremist actions, targets of violent attacks. This is the case with locations such as the Afghan camps in Pakistan, or the Yarmuk camp outside Damascus, whose inhabitants were used as human shields by DAESH, but also the cases of some centers in Germany and Sweden, attacked by arsonists.

Terrorist propaganda can be directed at migrants in refugee centers, since they are a particularly vulnerable category, and, in this regard, the media made various allegations, for example of DAESH trying to recruit in Turkish camps.

UN reports attribute the potential for radicalization in refugee's camps to three factors: lack of education, lack of work, and lack of freedom of movement. And intelligence can do much both in anticipating and preventing such radicalization, and in speeding up the process of vetting, in order to reduce opportunities for such radicalization.

For settled migrants, there are other specific cases of concern, particularly since states like France and Belgium have already experienced the destructive consequences of such actions. Differences on all levels – social, economic, cultural – as well as a traumatic migration process sometimes make settled migrants become unadjusted, self-perceived as second-rate citizens. And migrant communities can also become increasingly radicalized in reaction to unfortunate policies and/ or interventions.

Migrants and refugees themselves can become victims of violent extremism in their host societies. Isolated incidents or even fake news, as the famous allegations about immigrant perpetrated rapes in Germany, on New Year's Eve, 2016, can inform political decision, support populism and increase the level of social anxiety to the point of generating violent extremism or supremacism. Germany had over 900 reports of xenophobic violence in 2015, at the apex of the latest migration wave. Arsons by Molotov cocktails became frequent in many camps in European countries, from Austria and France, to Germany and the UK.

Case study – Christchurch, Australia. The Australian citizen who killed 50 Muslims in two New Zealand mosques in Christchurch, in March 2019, although apparently that of a self-radicalized lone wolf, is actually a result of such ideas and a sad example of the extreme effects this type of reactions can have.

An extremist and a xenophobe, connected to and supporting groups and organizations of the same orientation, the attacker tried to legitimate his political position through historical arguments pertaining to the European long-standing battle against the Ottoman Empire. Extremists encourage each other, they become accomplices, while globalization, social media, television, as well as more sophisticated instruments as the Deep/ Dark Web can help spread hatred and toxic ideas, and can lead to further radicalization, making the New Zealand events a franchise spreading through other countries, too.

On the other side, as a reaction to migration policies and in support of the migration agenda, extremists and anarchists also perpetrated other attacks, targeting authorities and infrastructure, in violent acts of vandalism and arsons such as the ones in France, Belgium, Italy or Greece.

Incidents motivated by hatred became, in fact, more and more frequent, and a category of terrorist attacks in themselves. Attacks on mosques in London and Quebec, as well as on Jewish worshippers in Pittsburg, were just as many warning signs.

Right wing terrorism and Islamic terrorism share a considerable number of common traits, such as the mechanisms for radicalization, the belief that “resistance” is a must, that their society is under threat and that they have an obligation to fight it, as well as a deformed vision of the past.

And there is another thing to consider in analyzing the connections among migration and intelligence. NATO official, general Phillip Breedlove, warned, in 2016, that Russia, with Syrian support, is weaponizing refugees in its attempt to destabilize the West. The aim was, in Breedlove's terms, “to overwhelm European structures and break European resolve”⁷, which seems particularly worrisome, in retrospect, since, should it have been a Russian strategy, the Syrian migratory wave has been able to produce quite a lot

⁷ *NATO Commander: Russia uses Syrian refugees as “weapons” against West*, March 2nd 2016, URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/nato-commander-russia-uses-syrian-refugees-as-weapon-against-west/a-19086285>, [accessed March 25th, 2019].

of dissension among EU member states, starting from immigration quotas and ending with the building of fences.

b. **Organized crime.** Migrant smuggling is already a phenomenon of severe consequences, the most obvious being the further vulnerabilization of an already vulnerable category of people.

Migrants are exposed to abuse, their lives put at risk in small containers or vehicles improper for human transportation, at sea or in the desert. Women and children are potential victims of human trafficking and exploitation. The UN estimates over 6.75 billion USD to be the approximate profit generated by the two main global smuggling routes. The figure tends to equal those representing profits from drugs or weapon trafficking.

At the height of the European migratory wave, in 2015, the chief of EUROPOL stated that the migrant smuggling industry in Europe amounted to over 30,000 people, while the agency was documenting, at the time, 1,400 such cases. Among those, known criminal groups such as the Italian Cosa Nostra were investigated for suspicions of involvement in migrant smuggling.

As with all cases of organized crime, corruption is one of the decisive factors for a successful enterprise in migrant smuggling, with corrupt officials turning a blind eye to the phenomenon. It is, therefore, no surprise that Italy, for example, has arrested, in 2015, several government officials responsible for managing camps and for helping asylum seekers settle in the country, for connections with smugglers.

Such criminal groups tend to merge or form cooperatives, expanding their reach and enlarging the categories of activities they undertake, in order to maximize profits.

False documents, stolen passports or even genuine documents obtained through fraudulent means are impediments for authorities to properly identify and process immigration requests and to keep nations safe.

By its very nature, migrant smuggling is transnational crime, and it involves closer international cooperation, with the main actors being law enforcement and intelligence agencies from origin, transit, and destination countries. And the problems they need to address are numerous, beginning with the shift of scope of other criminal networks, such as drug trafficking ones, to online advertising of such activities.

A Wiki leaks document exposed in 2015 showed concerns from EUROPOL chief that more intelligence was needed about those networks, in

order for European authorities to better counter the phenomenon.

c. **Intelligence limitations.** It would only be fair to say many consider terrorist attacks such as the one in Paris/ November 13th, 2005 failures of the intelligence system. In some cases, it indeed has proved unable to determine the exact threat and prevent it. And although I can personally state the phenomenon has been analyzed and anticipated, it is obvious that this was not enough to manage it or to fundament appropriate decision-making.

The cooperation formats mentioned previously are a necessary step, but it is not enough to ensure the security we all desire, and this, for a variety of reasons. First of all, not all involved intelligence services are EU or NATO members, therefore their standards can differ significantly. For EU member states, an impediment to closer intelligence cooperation is the fact that, through Article 4 of the EU Lisbon Treaty, “in particular, national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State”⁸.

d. Intelligence agencies underwent unequal reform processed, have unequal capacity and rely on significantly different legislation and attributes to fulfil the same task. Those particularities make consistent and coherent action difficult.

5. CONCLUSIONS

One of the few good news for Europe is that, after 2017, migration flows declined. Not all underlying motives are positive, as, on one side, some victories were won against DAESH in Syria, while, on the other side, uncertainty for potential migrants that they would have a better life in their host countries increased.

A second piece of good news is that, according to a European Counter Terrorism Center assessment, as of the end of 2017, the European migration routes are not *systematically* used by terrorists trying to infiltrate the continent, but rather sporadic appearances. They nevertheless require vigilance and cooperation with entry-point EU countries, such as Greece and Turkey⁹.

A third piece of good news is that the EU-Turkey refugee agreement is functional and

⁸ *The Treaty on the European Union*, URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012M004>, [accessed March 30th, 2019].

⁹ The European Parliament -*Terrorism in the EU – Attacks, Deaths and Arrests*, URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/security/20180703STO07125/terrorism-in-the-eu-terror-attacks-deaths-and-arrests>, [accessed March 25th, 2019].

manages to keep in check over 2.9 million refugees, according to UN reports.

Yet, there is much that still needs to be done in order to preserve this basic human right and to keep safe both migrant communities and entry, transit and host countries. Capacity building is essential. It is not necessarily that migration and border control, for example, are components of the counter-terrorist efforts, but they are a necessary effort, which can be significantly enhanced due to precious information delivered by the intelligence community.

Cooperation at present is much more than it was ten or twenty years ago, but nevertheless, it is far from perfect.

Efforts to prevent and counter trans-national crime preying on migrants should also advance further, in order to reduce the phenomenon to a minimum. Further legal efforts are also necessary in order to prosecute and punish activities such as violent Internet propaganda, which can affect both migrants and host societies.

The role of intelligence in this context needs to be extended, because intelligence agencies are in possession of a significant knowledge base which can be used to ensure security. And security is an essential premise for development.

Those particular needs and others were reunited by the International Migration Organization under the generic name of “system of international migration governance”, involving common rules and regulations, information exchange and joint action. And this could be a good start for a solution.

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¹⁰ *World Migration Report 2018*, URL: <https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/wmr/document/WMR%20IN FOSHEET%20No.%205.pdf>, [accessed March 24th, 2019].