



Panelist Paper

Migration as a Challenge for Regional Security

Council of Councils Ninth Regional Conference

October 30–November 1, 2016

German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, Germany

Ümit Pamir, Global Relations Forum

Uncontrolled and massive migratory flows pose humanitarian and security challenges to global peace and stability. The movement of refugees and migrants today is a global humanitarian crisis the likes of which has not been seen since World War II. The complexity of the problem and its transnational nature necessitate international solutions, and for that effective cooperation and genuine solidarity are needed.

Massive migratory flows have serious repercussions. Europe is a case in point. In 2015, over one million migrants made perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. The migration crisis has contributed to a mood of desperation and disarray regarding the future of the European Union (EU), further compounded by the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU. EU countries are deeply divided on the refugee crisis and lack a concerted and coordinated approach in their migration and asylum policies. Right-wing extremism, both in politics and society, is rising. Consequently, as a response to the migration crisis, several countries have introduced more restrictive migratory policies and enacted harsh measures against migrants.

Labeling migration as a security threat results in more of restrictive policies. Restrictive policies may be easy to enact and therefore seem preferable for states, but closing borders and building fences are temporary measures that ignore the core of the issue and do not change the fundamental reasons for irregular migration. Thus, these policies will be ineffective when countries are faced with large migratory pressures at their borders. Restrictive policies also make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for genuine asylum-seekers to apply for access to safe countries. Furthermore, restrictive policies often push migrants to choose more dangerous ways of crossing borders. This vicious circle should be avoided.

A paradigm shift is needed. Labeling migration as a security threat is dangerously misleading; therefore, migration should not be considered a security threat per se. First, there is little evidence that there is a greater concentration of terrorists, potential terrorists, or criminals among migrant populations than among local populations. Second, as history has proven, migration, if properly and effectively managed, can boost development and contribute to the countries of origin through workers' remittances and to destination countries by supplying needed labor force. The fifty-five-year long story of the Turkish community in Germany is a good example. They have become an integral part of German society and have contributed to Germany's social and economic development for over half a century.

Forced migration cannot be managed on a unilateral basis by individual states. It requires meaningful cooperation between countries of origin, transit, and destination. Geographical proximity should not be used as an excuse for shifting all responsibility to the countries in regions fraught with conflicts. Due to the war in Syria, 4.8 million Syrians have sought refuge in neighboring countries. According to the latest UN

figures, Jordan has taken in 700,000 Syrian refugees; Turkey has taken in 2.7 million; and Lebanon has taken in 1 million, making it the country with the highest per capita population of refugees in the world. These countries are bearing huge financial, infrastructural, and socioeconomic costs. In Turkey, the government and non-governmental organizations have spent nearly \$25 billion to meet the Syrian refugees' needs, without tangible assistance from the international community. Besides safety and protection, Turkey attributes the utmost importance to the well-being of Syrians. The refugees are provided with food and non-food items, health care and education services, psychological and social assistance, and vocational training. Turkey has also recently enabled Syrians to enter into the labor market as an avenue to improve their living standards. Turkey deploys every effort to contribute to the stability of the region and is ready to cooperate with all relevant parties to overcome the migration crisis.

International cooperation and burden sharing is needed more than ever to ensure the safe, orderly, and humane treatment of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons. The joint European Council-Turkey statement of March 18, 2016, is a good example of burden- and responsibility-sharing regarding the migration crisis. Turkey's efforts have generated a deterrent effect, preventing an estimated half a million irregular migrants from reaching the EU in the last six months. So far, the agreement has been effective in preventing the loss of lives, breaking the migrant-smuggling networks, and replacing irregular migration with legal migration. For the durable success of such cooperative initiatives, mutual commitments should be honored.

Policy Proposals:

- First, the causes of migration should be examined and defined. A sustainable solution to migration and refugee issues can only be attained if the root causes, such as wars, conflicts, and economic deprivation in many of the source countries, are addressed. While the search for a better economic situation is a primary driving force of global migration, security concerns due to conflicts causing today's forced migration crises. Sustainable responses to migration challenges can be improved if future factors and phenomena such as climate change are managed, or if crises such as natural disasters or health epidemics are prepared for or prevented
- Second, the global crisis should be acknowledged: while the political crisis in the Mediterranean Basin continues to cause a massive wave of forced displacement, the flow of migrants and refugees does not stop there. Dramatic events in the Bay of Bengal, the Gulf of Aden, the Horn of Africa, and eastern Europe show that migration crises loom larger and longer than previously assumed. Given the complex nature of the migration crisis, international cooperation and solidarity are indispensable in preventing and overcoming its challenges.
- Third, the source, transit, and destination countries should develop a new model of thinking and cooperation; the current way of looking at humanitarian assistance cannot provide the long-term response needed. It is clear that migrants need more than short-term emergency strategies. They also need a secure future in which their rights are respected and they are able both to benefit from and contribute to their host country's development. A perception of charity is not enough to make a change. International assistance has to be seen as a long-term investment for collective security, peace, and prosperity. Whether one is a donor, recipient, or both, one shares a responsibility toward increasingly interconnected societies.

The new model of thinking and cooperation should include:

- providing protection for those who need it so that genuine asylum-seekers can obtain their rights as enumerated in relevant international treaties; granting temporary protection could be another option for many destination countries that have internal political concerns regarding granting permanent refugee status to asylum seekers, which will enable national leaders to explain to the concerned public that once the situation returns to normal, refugees will return to their home countries;
- developing functional, timely, and equitable resettlement programs for refugees;
- giving tangible financial aid for refugee-hosting countries that struggle with large numbers of refugees;

- raising awareness for the need of a comprehensive and sustainable migration policy and burden- and responsibility-sharing;
- developing more legal channels for economic migrants. Many of the destination countries are in need of not only skilled but also semi-skilled labor; policies should be made to match the demand and supply sides of economic migration. At the same time, addressing economic instability and poverty in the least developed parts of the world would decrease the number of economic migrants. The ideal scenario is to create the necessary conditions for peaceful and prosperous existence in would-be migrants' home countries, which could be done by increasing financial and humanitarian aid as well as direct investments; and
- devising a mechanism to share best practices.

Leading nations should be at the forefront and set examples for the rest of the world. Adopting these measures will also eliminate migrant smuggling and human-trafficking networks that are a threat to law and order.

All of these policies should go hand in hand with policies addressing security challenges. Integration policies should be stepped up, and discrimination, racism, and xenophobia in receiving countries and countries of origin should be counteracted. Insufficient integration might push those caught between two cultures in search of an identity and a sense of psychological and ideological comfort, into radical tendencies. The issue of radicalization of young refugees also deserves special attention. In this respect, education is a vital instrument, and increased access to education and employment should be facilitated. Also, to succeed with integration policies, host societies should be more hospitable toward the migrants.

In summary, migration is not directly a source of insecurity. Its relationship with security depends on how it is tackled. Human security, particularly of refugees, and the security of the states are inseparable and interdependent.