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A “common space for internal security”:
a possible response to new security risks?

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Transnational identities: boon or curse for European security?

The security debate in Europe currently focuses on making frontiers safer, because some of the perceived dangers are linked to political and social issues geographically located abroad, which surface however inside the EU as result of the relentless dynamics of globalisation and integration at all levels. It is politically attractive to promise tough border controls to keep “dangerous persons” at bay and outside the EU. From this perspective the logic of Schengen is an attempt to create an “island of security” based on safe external borders. However, a strategic security policy can not be based on such simple and misleading causal projections, if it is to produce positive results.

In my short statement I would like firstly to draw attention to the fact that borders, even the best protected, are mostly ineffective against terrorist actors, contrary to what politicians sell to their voters in the present political climate which qualifies as bordering to hysteria. Secondly, the emphasis on controlling borders, on effectively identifying dangerous nations, ethnic groups or other minorities creates a counterproductive political climate and foregoes chances to act on the root causes of the perceived or real terrorist dangers. Finally, I will draw attention to a fundamental contradiction in the security strategies of OECD nations, namely that their flawed approach to the use of drugs has created the financial and organisational spine of all transnational organised crime. The geographic location of the Russian Federation between the region producing a large part of world production and important consumer markets, internal consumption and transit combined provides for criminal markets in the range of 200 to 400 billion dollars. No matter what control regime, governments are bound to fail in controlling these profitable markets.

Terrorists need not migrate

Migration, legal or illegal is an irreversible element of the present world order. And migration is likely to increase at all levels rather than decrease. Current policies emphasize border controls, but controls do not reduce migration. They only determine the respective

ratio between legal and illegal migration. Tight border controls are a boon for organised criminal actors whose prey are refugees and migrants of all kind.

In an increasing number of countries people are among the most important export commodities. This human export sector is growing in economic importance. Remittances secure the survival of large segments of the population back home in the respective countries. They contribute to a fragile stabilisation of many fragmenting states. Georgia, Armenia or Kosovo are cases in point. The aggregated figures of remittances do not distinguish between legal and illegal labour migration, in the balance of trade they complement the export revenues.

Because of the exceptional importance for the groups involved this increasingly illegal migration tends to consolidate in transnational economic networks which exploit their transnational reach and the ensuing advantages to trade legally or illegally. Slowly these networks objectively translate into transnational identities, which neither the governments involved often do not recognize nor the people concerned readily admit. A transnational identity means that members of this group are rooted in diverse social contexts beyond the point of considering to personally remigrate to sustain a homeland or create separatist nation state as is claimed in the ideology of national, religious or ethnic identity groups. This is, of course, a fluid process taking a wide variety of forms. Transnational identities are an emerging, though widely neglected element in the current process of globalisation. They form international networks increasingly operating in shadow-economic spheres as a result of the current policies to fortify national borders and to create insurmountable obstacles to the legalisation of already existing and functionally fully integrated immigrants. Given that shadow economies amenable to criminal control, transnational identity groups are often perceived as dominated by organised crime. The political dynamics of this perception tends to convert into a self-fulfilling prophesy as informal transactions are being criminalized in the name of fighting terrorism. Thus, many ill-conceived anti-terrorist measures have the potential to aggravate the situation and are counterproductive.

The disposition to act as a terrorist or in the extreme case as a suicide terrorist is a mental fixation whose creation is associated to a perceived exclusion of an identity group, on whose behalf individuals act as terrorists. It follows that security policies must avoid actions that are perceived as an exclusion of entire identity groups and accept the reality that migration and the ensuing minorities are an irreversible property of modern societies.

Transnational identity groups are a neglected source of conflict management

What is being overlooked in the current debate is the enormous potential of transnational identity groups to productively combat root causes of terrorism, if their spheres of transactions and living are legalised. The legalisation of the society as it actually operates deprives criminal actors and violent entrepreneurs of blackmail as tool of social control. The militant rhetoric of political entrepreneurs which projects an alternative world loses its

attraction if people have a sense of belonging and security in the social context where they actually live and work.

As an empirical evidence of this constructive potential one may look back how several hundred thousand immigrants from South-Eastern Europe behaved during the malicious armed confrontations during the wars back home. The absence of violence in Germany or Switzerland during the wars was quite remarkable, though not really noted by the political actors. Croats and Serbs, Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians exchanged arguments in public meetings, shouted at each other, but did not commit acts of violence against each other. Contrary to the rhetoric of nationalist leaders their capacity to recruit among the diaspora was quite limited among those who had migrated for economic reasons, while social support and remittances were substantial. The reported recruitment was stronger only among the political refugees, often even in the second or third generation, like the Croatian Ustasha.

Against this background governments should explore the potential of transnational networks with a base in the EU for their potential to influence politics back home in a constructive and civilizing way. There are many examples of the constructive role the diaspora can play in resolving political and ethnic confrontations. The Baltic states would be a case in point to be studied as the many people returning from exile played a constructive role in the transformation process. It should also be taken into account that the remittances could be converted in a valuable resource of needed investments if the people in the diaspora were given a legal status and transfers could take place in the regular economy. Rather than forcing refugees to return, the potential of the diaspora to act as foreign investors "back home" should be supported. Such linkages would have the potential to transmit know how and norms which are in dire need in post-conflict scenarios. Also while many professional qualifications in the diaspora lie idle, battalions of expensive foreign personnel are failing in UN or EU mandated programs "back home". A systematic exploration of the chances that diaspora contributes to reign in conflicts and fosters change in post-conflict reconstruction.

In short: politicians who propose tighter border control to fight organised crime should carefully consider that they by doing this aggravate the situation they pretend to fight. More importantly they forego chances to involve transnational identity groups in conflict resolution by conveying a feeling of exclusion.

Drugs: a structural danger for the EU-Russia security space

A look at the problem of drugs and organised crime might help to understand the comparable negative dynamics of measures taken in the "war on drugs". A rough estimate puts the drug related criminal market in the common EU-Russia security space at between 200 and 400 billion dollars annually. The size of the market is a direct function of the prosecution. If it were not for the by and large medically and socially unwarranted strict prohibition even of soft drugs (except alcohol and cigarettes), the drug sector would not be the backbone of globally organised crime. As a freely traded commodity the drugs market

would shrink to as little as five percent of its current value and cease to form the basis for international organised crime. The current drug policy, invented less than 100 years ago mainly in the United States and internationally imposed ever since, is beyond repair, it has moved straight forward into an operational cul-de-sac. The mutually reinforcing dynamic between prosecution and criminal profits produces ever larger social costs and absorbs scarce governmental resources which are lacking elsewhere to provide urgently needed public goods, including security and not least education on how to approach drugs responsibly.

The geographic configuration of the EU-Russia security region putting Russia with a growing internal market between production and consumption in the EU suggests that powerful organised transnational crime will be a permanent feature unless a reversal of the drug policy practically eliminates the criminal markets. As evidence becomes available that transnational terrorist networks generate the resources required for their terrorist activities, it becomes even more urgent to fundamentally rethink the drug strategy and accept that if people are endowed to decide by themselves whether to smoke or drink alcohol they should be entitled to make the same decision with respect to drugs. The drug use in the nineteenth century and the fact that certain high-level functional elites, Wall Street among others, are rumoured to regularly consume drugs demonstrates that the portrayed dangers to legitimise the current drug policy are not warranted.

The earlier this fundamental debate enters the political discourse the better will be the chances to eventually improve the security in the EU-Russia region. In the absence of such a U-turn in the drug policy, ineffective and ever more expensive drug control will have detrimental effects on the capacity of governments to provide societal security and will bestow organised crime, including terrorist groups with easy income generation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the brunt of my argument is that more attention should be paid to the negative dynamic of many security measures. This is particularly true for the current design of Russia's security policy in all its aspects. The current security discourse needs a wider framework, particularly with respect to migration and drugs. The current consensus that all trade should be free and not be hindered by any frontiers, while human beings are not covered by this regulatory consensus is untenable and requires some adaptation to the reality of our social fabric. The double standard in drug control (cigarettes and alcohol versus other stimulants) must also be modified if security policies in the EU-Russia region are to succeed.