Cross-Cutting Challenges and their Implications for the Mediterranean Region

Michael J. McNerney, Giacomo Persi Paoli, Sarah Grand-Clement
ew challenges are reshaping the international order, requiring government leaders to consider new strategies and tools that integrate diplomatic, economic, law enforcement and military instruments of power. Nowhere is this more evident than around the Mediterranean Sea, which has progressively returned as a region of global strategic interest where political tensions, armed conflict, economic and social instability and transnational criminal networks demand solutions that cross traditional institutional boundaries of domestic and international policymaking.

The geopolitical situation on the southern coast of the Mediterranean has radically changed and new challenges have emerged for the European Union (EU), United States (US) and beyond. Long-lasting issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or the tensions between Turkey and Greece, continue to be present, but new destabilising factors have emerged in the region following the Arab Spring of 2011.

The US, EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) continue to maintain a significant military presence in and around the Mediterranean, but military capabilities must be nested within a whole-of-government, international approach. The challenges in this region demand unprecedented levels of civil-military and intergovernmental cooperation.

In this context, RAND established the Mediterranean Foresight Forum (MFF) in 2015 to support the development of comprehensive, integrated civil-military responses to complex regional challenges through an innovative combination of research, scenario-based sensitivity analysis and strategic-level exercises.

This publication is the last in a series of four RAND Perspectives (PEs), each focusing on different challenges in the Mediterranean region. The first three PEs addressed Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, Defence and Security, and Criminal Activities.

Key findings and observations

- Europe’s greatest challenge emanating from the Mediterranean is migration. Diplomatic responses focusing on root causes may be crucial to achieving a long-term solution. The application of law enforcement, military and intelligence capabilities has at times appeared to be too little, too late. The provision of additional capabilities in a timely manner could buy time for diplomatic solutions to take hold.

- Maritime security demands coordination among a diverse range of stakeholders on issues ranging from counter-piracy to transnational crime to port security. A diplomatic surge may be required to effectively engage the full range of stakeholders. Maritime presence can have a clear impact, but law enforce-
**Understanding Cross-Cutting Challenges**

Mediterranean-focused analysis often addresses one or two problems from a relatively narrow perspective. For example, what are the implications of mass migration flows for European coastguard forces? This approach can help explain a particular problem in depth, but often fails to put that problem in a greater context. Understanding an issue from multiple perspectives and seeing how they relate is crucial for moving from identifying challenges to developing policy approaches to address those challenges. For example, what are the implications of mass migration flows for how European law enforcement agencies coordinate with United States (US) law enforcement agencies, with US and European militaries and with US and European diplomats?

The purpose of this Perspective is to briefly lay out several issues that recur throughout our Mediterranean Foresight Forum series in a way that allows senior policymakers to understand challenges from multiple perspectives and address them in a comprehensive way.

The complex array of issues analysed in our Mediterranean Foresight Forum series inevitably has implications that cut across national and organisational boundaries. For this Perspective, we analysed Europe’s most significant cross-cutting challenges: migration, maritime security and terrorism. In the last section, we used the framework in Table 1 below to break down how we understand the implications of each of these challenges in the context of each of our three thematic pillars: foreign policy and diplomacy; defence and security (focusing on both military and law enforcement tools); and criminal networks and activities. These pillars help us think about the challenges from the perspectives of US and European diplomats, defence organisations, law enforcement organisations and other civilian organisations. As with many analytic frameworks, this approach sacrifices comprehensiveness and some nuance in order to concisely organise these complex challenges into several component parts. At the end of the last section, we also take a brief look at the challenges of energy security and cybersecurity. Table 1 provides a preview of some of the key insights derived from our analysis.

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**Table 1 – Analytic Framework for Cross-cutting Challenges**

<table>
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<th>Diplomacy</th>
<th>Security</th>
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<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>• Diplomacy crucial to long-term solutions</td>
<td>• Law enforcement capabilities sometimes too little too late</td>
<td>• Need more intelligence and analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Increase focus on root causes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maritime security</td>
<td>• Diplomatic surge needed to engage full range of stakeholders</td>
<td>• Maritime presence can have impact</td>
<td>• Growing far beyond human smuggling success</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Insufficient response to date</td>
<td>• Threatening society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-terrorism</td>
<td>• Building trust is key</td>
<td>• Advance from strategies to comprehensive planning</td>
<td>• Overcome anti-crime, counter-terrorism stovepipes</td>
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Migration and border management challenges

As discussed in our Perspectives Report on Foreign Policy and Diplomacy and elsewhere, Europe’s greatest challenge is migration and management of its 3,000 miles of borders along the Mediterranean (almost 4,000 miles including Turkey). Its most significant implications are for European civilian agencies but there are also implications for US and European militaries and for US civilian agencies. The largest migrant flows across Europe since the Second World War have overwhelmed border management and law enforcement agencies, exposed major weaknesses in EU governance, sparked tensions among nations, exacerbated domestic political turmoil, and spurred steps towards renewed border controls within the European Union (EU).

The International Organization for Migration determined that 2015 was the deadliest year on record for refugees and other migrants crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe, with 3,771 migrants dead or missing. As Figure 1 shows, the majority of the million-plus migrants arriving in Europe in 2015 landed in Greece but the majority of fatalities occurred along central Mediterranean routes, which are used primarily by smugglers operating from Libya (International Organization for Migration, 2016b). Although much of the attention in 2015 was on the eastern Mediterranean, migration affected several countries spanning from the eastern to western ends of the sea. While flows were higher in the summer, migration was a year-round challenge. And while many migrants were refugees fleeing violence in Syria, there were also many thousands fleeing violence, repression or economic hardships in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Pakistan, Iran and elsewhere.

Based on the figures in Figure 1, in 2015, there was about one death for every 1,052 arrivals in Greece and about one death for every 53 arrivals in Italy. As shown in Figure 2 below, migration continued to be a serious challenge in 2016 with one death for every 429 arrivals in Greece and about one death for every 47 arrivals in Italy in the first nine months of 2016.

Most reporting in 2015 focused on migrants travelling from Turkey to Greece. As discussed in our Perspectives Report on Criminal Networks, however, there are extensive transit routes to Italy, as well. These long distances, along with the rough seas of the central Mediterranean, help explain the high percentage of migrants who die on these journeys. Although the EU–Turkey agreement on reducing the flow of migrants into Greece helped contribute to a drop in migration across the eastern Mediterranean, 2016 saw a rise of migrant arrivals to Italy, which some called the new ‘front line’ (Blamont & Labbé, 2016).

The largest migrant flows across Europe since the Second World War have overwhelmed border management and law enforcement agencies, exposed major weaknesses in EU governance, sparked tensions among nations, exacerbated domestic political turmoil, and spurred steps towards renewed border controls within the European Union.
Figure 1 – Migrant arrivals and fatalities 2015 (International Organization for Migration, 2015)

Arrivals
Deaths

Land migration routes
Maritime migration routes

Spain
Italy
Greece
Malta
Cyprus

1,004,356 arrivals by sea in 2015
3,771 dead/missing in 2015

Arrival figures on map refer to maritime arrivals only. Estimates based on data from respective governments and IOM field offices.

Migrant fatalities in the Mediterranean

Top five countries of origin Jan-Nov 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin country</th>
<th>Destination: Italy</th>
<th>Destination: Greece</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>37,882</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>20,171</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>11,242</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>8,766</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>7,387</td>
<td>Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>7,387</td>
<td>Iran</td>
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</tbody>
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Diplomacy

Mass migrations into Europe are primarily a border management issue from an operational perspective, but border management cannot address the root cause, which stems largely from ongoing conflicts – most significantly in Syria. Although military and law enforcement tools play a role in addressing both migration challenges and conflicts in the region, the solution to mass migrations into Europe depends extensively on diplomacy. There is no better example of this than the March 2016 EU agreement with Turkey on stemming migrant flows. While media reports focused on the almost $7bn in assistance for Syrian refugees in Turkey, much of the diplomatic effort focused on even more complex negotiations. For example, European diplomats had to coordinate positions about whether, when and – most importantly – under what conditions to allow visa-free travel for Turkish citizens. They also had to develop potential steps towards EU membership for Turkey. EU member states had to negotiate increased quotas for accepting legal refugees; furthermore, they had to determine measures to assist Greece in housing, processing and returning migrants to Turkey, an effort requiring the deployment of thousands of judges, lawyers, translators and border guards on Greek islands to hear the cases of asylum seekers, before sending them back to Turkey. At the same time, diplomats had to address strong criticisms from Amnesty International, the Vatican and others that the agreement...
Effective diplomacy often requires coordination with officials who oversee financial assistance funds, who can change domestic policies, or who can provide law enforcement, military or intelligence support.

was damaging to human rights and humanitarian law (Pop & Dendrinou, 2016). However, this agreement has come under strain since the July 2016 attempted coup in Turkey and subsequent crackdown by the Turkish government. Disagreements with the EU on the treatment of dissidents post-coup, and the prospect of not attaining visa-free travel to Europe for Turkish citizens have meant that the agreement has not yet come into place. This uncertainty has resulted in migrants continuing to make their way into Greece from Turkey (Yeginsu, 2016).

Effective diplomacy often requires coordination with officials who oversee financial assistance funds, who can change domestic policies, or who can provide law enforcement, military or intelligence support. Throughout 2015 and into 2016, countries in Europe, and particularly those bordering Greece, were closing their borders to migrants, transporting migrants to neighbouring countries, restricting migrant resettlement and in some cases fining citizens trying to help migrants. At the same time, migration affected the internal political dialogue of many countries, strengthening populist, anti-immigrant and isolationist voices. Migration and deaths at sea continued to surge, human-smuggling networks grew larger and bolder, conditions at overcrowded camps worsened, and concerns about terrorists posing as migrants spiked.

In response, diplomats worked to coordinate financial assistance packages for Greece, Turkey, and countries in the Middle East and North Africa. They coordinated and debated updates to domestic laws and policies governing migrant processing and absorption of refugees. They coordinated multinational law enforcement and military actions, as well as intelligence-sharing.

These efforts were designed to help European governments improve assistance to migrants while regaining some level of control over migrant flows. But in order to get to more long-term solutions, diplomats will need to get to the roots of the mass migration challenges in and near the countries from which migrants are fleeing. Diplomats will need to further leverage foreign aid tools to tend to displaced persons in their home countries or in neighbouring countries like Jordan and Lebanon (Culbertson et al., 2016). They will need to continue the challenging negotiations to establish ceasefires and a peace plan for Syria. And they will need to leverage defence and security tools to address instability and terrorism in Syria and Iraq, and across the Middle East and Africa. These long-term solutions, which lie primarily outside Europe’s borders, are also where US diplomats have critical roles to play. European security and its political and economic stability are vital US interests, and American diplomats have been engaged around the Mediterranean both to protect those interests and to protect the US homeland from abroad. As with their European counterparts, American diplomats have needed to leverage financial, law enforcement, military and other tools to support a coordinated effort in multiple locations from Turkey to Iraq to Syria to North Africa to the high seas.
Security

When analysing migration challenges from a security perspective, the implications for law enforcement range from domestic law and order to border management to counter-terrorism. While migrants created challenges within most EU member states and at their national borders, the primary migration challenge for law enforcement officials lay at the EU’s external borders. The volume of migrants crossing into Greece overwhelmed border patrol officers and other security forces. The EU’s border management agency, Frontex, provided additional border officers and vessels, and it increased its intelligence support to monitor migrant flows and track human-smuggling networks. However, the EU’s response to the crisis consistently appeared to be too little, too late. For example, Frontex agreed to deploy Rapid Border Intervention Teams to Greek islands but not until December 2015, while EU members by that time had offered 448 additional border agents after a request by Frontex in October for 775 (Frontex, 2015a). Only about one in five migrants were intercepted upon reaching the shores of Greece in 2015 (Frontex, 2015). Efforts in 2016 were also off to a slow start, as EU members offered fewer than 400 additional officers by April after a request for 1,500 (Frontex, 2016a). Pressures in the central Mediterranean meant that in June 2016 Frontex called on EU member states to provide even more vessels in order to assist the Italian government, in addition to the 14 vessels currently in use in Operation Triton (Frontex, 2016b & 2016c).

The challenges have been significant for Italy. About 15,000 migrants were rescued off its coast between 28 August and 3 September 2016 (Thomas & Titheradge, 2015). The number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean into Italy totalled nearly 95,000 in the first seven months of 2016, similar in number to the amount received the same time the previous year. While almost all of these migrants were from sub-Saharan Africa, tighter border security measures in Greece could also lead to a shift from the eastern to the central Mediterranean over time, resulting in even greater flows into Italy. Frontex established Operation Triton under the control of Italy in November 2014 to provide an EU replacement to Italy’s Mare Nostrum operation. After a year of operations, however, Operation Triton had only a fraction of the budget, personnel and capabilities of Mare Nostrum (Kirchgaessner, Traynor & Kingsley, 2015).

In addition to migrant interdiction, the crisis also involved law enforcement support to diplomatic negotiations, in some cases to good effect. For example, among Turkey’s requests for agreeing to the March 2016 migrant management deal was a programme to allow Turkish citizens to travel to EU countries without needing a visa. But many European governments were wary of establishing a visa waiver programme for Turkey, a country of almost 80 million people suffering from economic problems, a failed military coup, an increasingly autocratic government, significant terrorist threats and porous borders with neighbours like Syria and Iraq. Diplomats, however, worked with law enforcement officials to identify how the

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programme could improve rather than weaken European security by restricting visa-free travel to Turks who use machine-readable, biometric passports, which should incentivise greater use of these more secure identification documents (Macdonald, 2016).

Law enforcement cooperation between the EU and US has also been important, particularly where migration might intersect with other security challenges like transnational crime and terrorism. Europol stepped up its engagement with US officials in 2015 and 2016, including through exchanges with the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Customs and Border Protection, the US Secret Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the US National Central Bureau of Interpol, and other agencies (Europol, 2015a). For example, in April 2016, US Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson discussed migration and terrorism challenges with Italian Interior Minister Angelino Alfano (DHS Press Office, 2016).

As we discuss in the maritime issues section below (Section 3), the EU deployed ships in the Mediterranean in 2015 and 2016 to interdict and rescue migrants, as part of its wider maritime security efforts. The EU launched an operation in the southern central Mediterranean in June 2015 called European Union Naval Force – Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR Med or Operation Sophia). The composition of the force varied over time but included an Italian aircraft carrier as its flagship and eight naval vessels and 12 air assets deployed during its first phase of operation (European Union External Action, 2015). By the second phase of its operation in spring 2016, forces were reduced to five vessels and six air assets (European Union External Action, 2016). By April 2016, over 13,000 migrants had been rescued (Pelz, 2016).

The EU also set up the European Regional Task Force in June 2015 in Sicily to coordinate migration management efforts among agencies including Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office, Europol and EUNAVFOR Med (Frontex, 2016d). In March 2016, the EU also put forward a motion for the creation of a European Border and Coast Guard Agency, as well as improved national authorities and coastguards responsible for border management. This new agency would have a force of about 1,500 deployable border guards, as well as stronger authorities and almost triple the budget of Frontex (Cendrowicz, 2016; European Commission, n.d.; Frontex, 2016e).

In February 2016, NATO announced it would also deploy ships to address Europe’s migrant crisis and by the following month had deployed ships into Greek and Turkish territorial waters in the Aegean Sea. NATO’s Standing Maritime Group 2, under German command, comprises seven ships from different allies, leading the operation focused primarily on surveillance and information-sharing (BBC, 2016a; NATO, 2016a). NATO’s cooperation with the EU has included surveillance in the Aegean Sea and at the Turkey–Syria border and intelligence-sharing with Frontex (The Economist, 2016).

Although US law enforcement and military involvement in Europe’s migration crisis was limited in 2015 and early 2016, cooperation has increased and would be likely to increase further in a future crisis. Whereas NATO’s 2014 summit in Wales focused on growing threats from Russia, the 2016 summit in Warsaw saw an increased focus on the Mediterranean, which has included increasing cooperation with the EU on Operation Sophia and an expanded maritime presence in the Mediterranean (Operation Sea Guardian) (NATO, 2016b & 2016c).
Criminal networks
As discussed in a prior Perspectives report, criminal networks have played a central – but poorly understood – role in driving Europe’s migrant crisis. As Figure 3 shows, the same networks that conduct human-trafficking activities are often also involved in other transnational crime, such as narcotics trafficking and document forgery (Europol, 2016). Links to arms trafficking and terrorist networks are also possible.

![Figure 3 Migrant Smuggling Suspects’ Links To Other Crime Areas (Europol, 2015)](image)

Europol has reported that over 90 per cent of migrants travelling to the EU use ‘facilitation services’, in most cases provided by criminal groups. In 2015, criminal networks were estimated to have generated €3–6bn in income from these activities. In 2015, Europol had intelligence on 12,200 individuals suspected of involvement in migrant smuggling; in the first nine months of 2016, over 12,000 new suspects had been added to the Europol databases (Europol, 2016a & 2016b).

Criminal networks have grown increasingly bold in 2015 and 2016, and have threatened border guards and rescue teams on several occasions to recover boats used to ferry the migrants across the sea. Such a case took place in February 2016, when an Italian Coast Guard vessel carrying 247 rescued migrants was attacked by four men armed with Kalashnikovs when it tried to tow the empty migrant boat. The attackers, who arrived on a speed boat, took it back to Libya, presumably to reuse it for future smuggling operations (Frontex, 2015b & 2016f).

As these networks grow and become more aggressive, they pose ever-greater challenges to Europol and other organisations. In February, Europol launched a European Migrant Smuggling Centre to focus on criminal hotspots and build EU capabilities to counter human-smuggling networks. The centre was designed to strengthen coordination and improve assistance to EU member states, and was modelled on the European Cybercrime Centre and European Counter Terrorism Centre (Europol, 2016c). As of September 2016, the centre had 42 experts and analysts who provide operational and analytical support, as well as 15 Europol specialists located at hotspots in Greece and Italy. Since February, the centre had supported a total of 62 high-level investigations and identified just under 500 vessels of interest (Europol, 2016b).

On the military side, although the EU’s Operation Triton had been patrolling in and around the Mediterranean in support of migrant operations since November 2014, it was not until the EU began Operation Sophia in June 2015 that efforts to counter
human-smuggling networks increased. After months of gathering intelligence, the operation was authorised in October 2015 to ‘board, search, seize and divert vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking on the high seas’, with a focus on the Mediterranean north of Libya (Mullen, 2015).

NATO’s Maritime Command had returned standing naval forces to European seas since 2014, but – like the EU – did not utilise military naval forces to counter smuggling until the migrant crisis had peaked. Unlike with the EU, it was understood that if NATO warships identified boats with migrants, they would call on European coastguard forces and only directly intervene as a last resort (BBC, 2016b).

**Maritime Security**

Effective maritime security requires understanding, capabilities and coordination in areas as diverse as maritime safety, counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, transnational crime, natural resource management and port security. With 21 countries bordering it and many more relying on it for trade and transit, maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea constitutes a vital interest for governments around the world. While the migration crisis has exacerbated maritime security challenges, they have existed in the region throughout history, and they continue to evolve and impact the spheres of diplomacy, security and criminal networks.

**Diplomacy**

While many of the Mediterranean’s historical disputes over issues like territorial waters, exclusive economic zones, natural resource competition and piracy are now less frequent, growing instability in the region raises the likelihood of renewed tensions. Even prior to the migration crisis, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and deployments of warships in the Mediterranean raised concerns in Europe about Russian intentions (Russia Today, 2013). In 2014, the EU issued a maritime security strategy, laying out potential threats relating to issues including infrastructure protection, freedom of navigation, illegal trafficking and terrorism. The strategy’s action plan described steps to improve maritime awareness, surveillance, information-sharing, capability development and risk management (European Commission, 2016).

The migration crisis served to heighten these concerns dramatically. Based on a similar effort to that which arose to help coordinate counter-piracy missions around the Horn of Africa, a coalition of countries convened a Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE) meeting for the Mediterranean in September 2015, chaired by EUNAVFOR Med. The meeting included civilian and military officials from national governments, the EU, the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organisations involved in migrant rescue efforts (European Union Naval Force Mediterranean, 2015).

One look at a map makes it clear why Mediterranean maritime security has economic and security implications for countries far
beyond its borders. The foreign policy challenges cross an almost overwhelming number of national and organisational boundaries. Thus, strategies and coordination meetings are crucial first steps but insufficient to the problems at hand. The greater challenge for diplomats is to find ways to promote multinational planning among diverse stakeholders, with particular emphasis on identifying and addressing capability requirements. These are tasks that may require a ‘diplomatic surge’ to coordinate these stakeholders and focus them on concrete next steps.

Security

While maritime security threats were already increasing challenges to European coastguards and other law enforcement agencies, a combination of events also helped to refocus EU and NATO military forces on the Mediterranean in 2015 and 2016. First, Russian naval activity grew, particularly through the stationing of warships to support military operations in Syria, but also through Russia’s activities to reassert itself as a Mediterranean naval power. In 2013 Russia announced it would re-establish a permanent fleet in the Mediterranean for the first time since 1992 (Russia Today, 2013). In May 2015, Russia and China held their first joint naval wargames in European waters (Holmes, 2015). Second, human smuggling increased significantly, both in the eastern and central Mediterranean, bringing along with it a general sense of increasing lawlessness and bold criminality on the high seas. Third, terrorist attacks in Denmark, France, the UK and Belgium, and a more general fear of Islamic extremism and European jihadists returning from abroad heightened terrorism concerns. Threats of maritime terrorism against fuel tankers, tourist cruise ships or other vessels seemed more likely than in the past.

As mentioned earlier, EUNAVFOR MED’s military operation focused largely on intercepting migrant smugglers and capturing or destroying their vessels (European Union External Action, 2015). As of May 2016, the operation had captured 69 smugglers, seized 114 smuggling boats and rescued nearly 14,000 migrants (BBC, 2016c). But these EU naval forces coordinating and operating in the Mediterranean also served to increase European presence in a way that could subtly respond to Russian actions, reduce lawlessness, improve maritime surveillance, react to potential terrorist events and generally strengthen maritime security.

NATO’s mission centred more on the Aegean and was less about rescuing migrants or capturing smugglers and more about surveillance support, presence and enhancing cooperation with Greece, Turkey and the EU. NATO could monitor the maritime environment and share information in real time with the Greek and Turkish coastguards and also with Frontex. With this presence in the Aegean also came greater presence in the Mediterranean and the potential for NATO to strengthen maritime security in collaboration with the EU. In 2016, NATO began the process of transforming its naval operation Active Endeavour, established after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, into a broader maritime security

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operation. Following the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean was transformed into Operation Sea Guardian, a maritime security operation which has a broader remit including providing maritime situational awareness, countering trafficking, upholding freedom of navigation, supporting maritime counter-terrorism and contributing to capacity-building (NATO, 2016d & 2016e)

**Criminal networks**

The dramatic growth in human smuggling has increased concerns about other forms of transnational crime that threaten maritime security. With an explosion of business in trafficking migrants, criminal groups grew in size and sophistication. They became more organised and used their growing wealth to purchase better weapons and communication equipment. They also used their money to bribe law enforcement officers and politicians, fuelling corruption at multiple levels in many countries. Local networks developed relationships with regional and international groups, complicating threats to maritime law and order.

As law enforcement agencies surged to counter their efforts, criminal networks also adapted. For example, when EU vessels became more active interdicting migrant vessels in international waters, smugglers operating from Libya began to stay in Libyan territorial waters, leaving migrants to fend for themselves across the central Mediterranean (Pelz, 2016). In Turkey, smugglers have developed systems to process payments, procure supplies, forge passports and bribe officials, all while staying out of the way of law enforcement (Fitzherbert, 2016). Despite Turkey’s deployment of additional gendarmerie along its coasts and high-profile police raids, smugglers moved deeper into the shadows, leveraging informants and social media (Rubin, 2016).

**Terrorism**

The challenges of terrorism have become more closely linked to the Mediterranean region in recent years. These threats have implications for all of Europe, North America and elsewhere. The centre of gravity for terrorism has shifted from al-Qaeda, which was most active in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa to ISIS, which is most active around the greater Mediterranean region. Europeans have been radicalised by ISIS via social media and sometimes travel to fight jihad with them and return home, creating growing concerns about home-grown terrorist attacks. Instability in the Middle East and North Africa seems to literally spill into the Mediterranean Sea in the forms of migrants and lawlessness, exacerbating concerns about terrorist movements across the region. These challenges have serious implications for our three focus areas of diplomacy, security and criminal networks.

**Diplomacy**

Even before the migration crisis and the 2015 Paris attacks, European and US diplomats were working to address challenges to effective counter-terrorism coordination. This cooperation took several forms, including EU–US collaboration and collaboration among the EU, NATO and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

EU counter-terrorism cooperation with the US has faced limitations based on differences in views on issues like privacy and intelligence-sharing, as well as ambiguities about when multilateral vs. bilateral avenues are more effective. Nevertheless, cooperation
NATO, for its part, has pursued improved counter-terrorism collaboration through its Mediterranean Dialogue, which has included seven non-NATO countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

has grown in recent years. The EU has been a key US partner in the 30-member Global Counterterrorism Forum, liaisons have been established between Europol and Eurojust agencies and US law enforcement agencies, and agreements have been put in place to share data related to terrorist financing (Archick, 2014). In 2015, Europol and US Customs and Border Protection officials signed the Focal Point Check-Point agreement to counter foreign fighters returning from jihad and to combat human smuggling (Europol, 2015b). On the other hand, European partners have sometimes been cautious about the extent to which they will open up their intelligence and other sensitive data to US officials. Also, the need for US officials to negotiate some issues with the EU and other parties on a bilateral basis has sometimes led to diplomatic disconnects and frictions (Archick, 2014).

The EU has faced similar multilateral vs. bilateral challenges in its efforts to improve cooperation with partners in the Middle East and North Africa. For example, in 2015 the EU’s European External Action Service deployed eight security and intelligence experts to missions in the Middle East and Africa to serve as counter-terrorism attachés. But this was a new role for the External Action Service, whereas individual EU countries already had strong intelligence ties with specific partners in these regions (de la Baume & Paravicini, 2015).

NATO, for its part, has pursued improved counter-terrorism collaboration through its Mediterranean Dialogue, which has included seven non-NATO countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. Within the context of that forum, NATO officials have developed individual action plans with each partner, often including cooperative activities in support of counter-terrorism goals. For example, in 2016, NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg highlighted NATO’s work with Tunisian intelligence and special forces to fight terrorism (Stoltenberg, 2016). NATO’s Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which includes Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, has also been a forum for counter-terrorism collaboration. Lastly, NATO–EU cooperation – while traditionally fraught with challenges – had the potential to improve after the 2016 NATO and EU summits, where both organisations signed a Joint Declaration on cooperation committing to working together on countering threats, adapting operational cooperation in maritime and migrant terms, and coordinating defence (Consilium, 2016).

Security

In recent years, the EU negotiated ways to strengthen Europol, as well as Eurojust, a unit charged with improving prosecutorial coordination in cross-border crimes in the EU. The EU has also worked to harmonise national laws, enhance information-sharing among member states, establish an EU-wide arrest warrant system, and create new measures to strengthen external EU border controls (Archick, 2014). But diplomats have continued to face differing views on data privacy and resistance to many aspects of intelli-
gence cooperation. For example, the EU launched the Focal Point Travelers initiative in 2014 to share intelligence on movements of potential terrorists. But European governments resisted, and the programme could only consolidate information on about half of the foreign fighters known to individual European security agencies (de la Baume & Paravicini, 2015). In January 2016, Europol established the European Counter Terrorism Centre to serve as a central information hub. The centre started with 39 staff and five seconded national experts under Europol’s Operations Department, and has since selected 15 members for the Advisory Group on terrorist propaganda (Europol, 2016d & 2016e). While such a centre may serve an important coordination role, it may face the ‘too little, too late’ problem also evident in the EU’s responses to the migration crisis. The US Congress criticised the National Counter Terrorism Center in 2010 for being inadequately organised and resourced, despite a staff of 500 personnel from more than 16 agencies (Best, 2011).

Would similar concerns not apply to the EU’s centre? Counter-terrorism efforts around the Mediterranean are certainly not limited to coordination and information-sharing functions. US, Russian and Turkish ships are all active in the eastern Mediterranean and trying to manage security interests that are overlapping but not aligned. For example, both the US and Russia have used their warships in the Mediterranean to launch missile strikes against Syria, while the US also conducts ballistic missile defence and other missions (Kramer & Barnard, 2016).

At the 2012 Chicago Summit, NATO endorsed a new policy for counter-terrorism, focusing on three areas. First, NATO committed to improving threat awareness, including by sharing intelligence among NATO members through its Intelligence Unit and by sharing intelligence with partners through its Intelligence Liaison Units. Second, NATO worked to strengthen counter-terrorism capabilities of members through its Defence Against Terrorism Programme of Work and through its Centres of Excellence, including the Centre of Excellence for Defence Against Terrorism in Ankara, Turkey. Third, NATO enhanced its engagement with other countries and organisations like the EU, UN, and Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (NATO, 2016f).

In addition to these ongoing efforts, NATO’s most important role may be its ability to deploy significant numbers of forces for crisis situations. NATO’s Operation Unified Protector in 2011 established a no-fly zone over Libya, authorised by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 in order to protect civilians. While the operation was not focused on counter-terrorism, it serves as a good example of the capabilities NATO can bring to bear in either a counter-terrorism mission or one to stabilise a country at risk of becoming a safe haven for terrorists. As Figure 4 below shows, NATO has extensive command and control and force projection capability across the entire span of the Mediterranean. At its peak, Operation Unified Protector involved about 8,000 troops, over 260 air assets and 21 naval assets. Its aircraft flew over 9,700 strike sorties, destroying over 5,900 military targets. Its ships hailed over 3,100 vessels, boarded over 300 and rescued over 600 migrants in distress at sea (NATO, 2011). There are many state collapse and/or terrorist attack scenarios in which NATO subsequently finds itself planning a force deployment to a country in North Africa or the Levant. Whereas NATO officials may see current migrant, maritime security, and even terrorism threats as secondary to, for example, planning against renewed threats from Russia, Unified Protector is an example of how NATO can suddenly find its priorities shifting to the south.
Criminal Networks

The US Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime notes that criminal and terrorist networks collaborate to improve their access to funding, logistical support, staging, procurement, safe havens and facilitation of services and material, including materials for weapons of mass destruction (National Security Council, n.d.). Although terrorist groups are driven by ideological objectives while criminal networks are driven by financial gain, there are compelling reasons for them to cooperate. Terrorists need to procure equipment and to recruit, transport and feed many of their operatives. Criminal networks can either provide these goods and services — for a price — or collaborate with terrorist groups in acquiring funds together through illicit profit-making activities. For example, terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda have reportedly collaborated with the Italian mafia, while ISIS has developed its own transnational criminal enterprises to fund many of its operations (D’Alfonso, 2014; Hesterman, 2004).

While both the US and EU recognise the growing threats from the criminal network-terrorism nexus, anti-crime and counter-terrorist units within governments face significant challenges sharing intelligence. Moreover, there is a dearth of research analysing the details of these linkages or future trends. The complications involved in promoting such cooperation in a multinational context are daunting to say the least, and seem to require far greater...
attention on the part of governments with a stake in Mediterranean security and stability (European Parliament, 2012).

A final consideration is the involvement of the private sector, particularly the financial industry. Private companies play a crucial role in countering both criminal networks and terrorist financing activities. Public-private partnerships would need to be strengthened across the greater Mediterranean region and beyond to identify gaps in current regulations and to find innovative solutions to shutting down terrorist use of fraud, money laundering and other criminal activities (European Parliament, 2012).

**Analysing Cross-cutting Challenges**

When analysing challenges like migration, maritime security, terrorism, energy security and cybersecurity, one overriding theme stands out: European security is increasingly linked to security in the Middle East and North Africa. While the US benefits from its geographical distance from these challenges that threaten the greater Mediterranean region, it is certainly not immune to them. The challenges analysed above are all global in nature. Europe’s vital interests are in many ways America’s vital interests. Moreover, the forces that create political instability, facilitate terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, disrupt regional trade and threaten energy and cyber infrastructure are forces that can also reach into the US homeland.

The sections below summarise the implications of these challenges for the Mediterranean region looking forward.

**Implications of Migration**

As discussed previously in this perspective, the combination of the EU–Turkey agreement, stricter border policies, efforts to counter criminal groups, and EU and NATO maritime operations and information-sharing may have helped reduce the flow of migrants entering Greece in spring and summer 2016. According to Frontex as shown in Figure 5, the total number of migrants detected crossing the EU’s external borders in the eastern Mediterranean for the first three months of 2016 was 151,000, but only 8,500 between April and July 2016 after the EU and Turkey started conferring about the migrant deal (Frontex, 2016g).

**Figure 5 – Migration Changes in the Eastern Mediterranean**

Meanwhile, improved weather in the central Mediterranean region led to more than double the number of migrants – mostly sub-Saharan Africans – crossing the sea to Italy in March 2016 compared to February 2016. As shown in Figure 6, the March 2016 total was about four times the number from March 2015 (Frontex, 2016h).
So what are the main implications of our analysis of migration through the lenses of diplomacy, security and criminal networks? First, improved coordination and concerted action on the diplomacy, security and criminal fronts – however imperfect – can have significant impacts. As previously discussed, reactive, ad hoc actions taken only at the national level proved to be not only ineffective but sometimes counter-productive, whereas better collaboration later in 2015 and into 2016 led to better results. Clearly, how actions are taken can be as important as the actions themselves. Second, despite some promising end results, European and US actions have consistently appeared to be too slow. Coordination among law enforcement and military organisations, European and US officials, national and multinational representatives, and other combinations of stakeholders has often been tentative and confusing. Because of a lack of historical institutional dialogue, shared exercises and well-managed processes among many of these stakeholder groups, what should have been rapid, robust engagement has often been more of a cautious journey of discovery. Third, once actions are taken, they have often proven insufficient to the task at hand, such as the limited naval assets deployed by both the EU and NATO and the limited national responses to Frontex requests for border patrol officers. Applying additional resources to the challenges of the Mediterranean region does not seem anywhere close to the point of diminishing returns. Fourth, threats from the region are constantly changing, so stakeholders must be innovative and adaptive. Perceived interests and thus negotiating terms among many countries have changed over time, and diplomats have been pressed for creative solutions. Migrant flows have changed with political and security situations. Other factors like social media and the weather have also had major impacts. Criminal networks have leveraged weaknesses and opportunities in the countries where they operate but have also been weakened and forced to adapt when countries have taken more concerted action.

For both law enforcement communities and – increasingly – military forces, the future appears to promise a continued migrant crisis bedevilled by rapid change and uncertainty, as well as populist and isolationist political trends. While it is possible that migration around the Mediterranean will become less challenging over time, it seems likely that more problems lie ahead with the real potential for additional spikes or other migration crises. When combined with the challenges discussed in the next section – maritime security and terrorism – it is difficult to imagine that European and American policymakers will be able to reduce their focus on this volatile region. In fact, there are more than a few crisis scenarios stretching around the Mediterranean that could make the challenges of 2015 and 2016 pale in comparison.
Implications of Maritime Security

Maritime security has been a challenge in the Mediterranean since before the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Yet issues once thought to be relatively well under control compared to other maritime regions around the world – maritime safety, high-seas crime, port security – are again becoming areas of concern. These changes are in large part due to the impact of the other cross-cutting challenges analysed in this Perspective: migration and terrorism. There are several implications of this ‘risk of regression’ in maritime security. First, European and US diplomats must put maritime security issues on the table in their engagements with the governments of North Africa and the Levant. These governments have important roles to play managing migration flows, security threats, criminal networks and other drivers of maritime insecurity. Rather than narrow discussions on one particular threat, a holistic and reinvigorated approach to maritime security may have a more enduring impact on regional stability. For example, rather than individual nations reacting to particular incidents of maritime safety violations, kidnappings, threats to ships and ports, human-smuggling incidents, etc., the EU and the US might convene a ministerial meeting with counterparts from eastern and southern Mediterranean countries to comprehensively review steps needed to implement existing maritime security strategies more effectively. Second, as with migration, presence matters. Naval and other assets in and around the Mediterranean can serve multiple functions from collecting intelligence to facilitating search and rescue to combating crime to deterring potential adversaries like Russia. Responses to growing maritime threats have been slow and limited. Without the deployment of more capabilities into the region, the EU and NATO will struggle to manage ongoing challenges, much less react effectively to future crises. Third, criminal networks, strengthened by their successes in human-smuggling operations, pose growing threats across the full range of maritime security concerns. They are well funded, well equipped and well protected through their corruption-fuelled networks. Efforts to counter them in Europe have met with some success, but they continue to adapt and thrive, while many under-governed areas along the southern and eastern Mediterranean offer safe havens for their activities. National law enforcement efforts may increasingly require the capabilities and leadership that only the EU can provide.

Implications of Terrorism

Terrorist threats emanating from the greater Mediterranean region continue to grow and reach ever deeper into European society. The threats to the US are also growing. When US and European counter-terrorism cooperation initially expanded in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the threats were perceived as largely coming from distant lands: Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa. Responses focused largely on issues like improved airport security and troop deployments to Afghanistan. As the instability and lawlessness that provide havens for terrorists have crept closer to European borders, the implications have become increasingly clear. First, mistrust about data security and privacy are hampering counter-terrorism collaboration both within Europe and between Europe and the US. Improving trust and strengthening intelligence-sharing processes will need to be a higher diplomatic priority to overcome these obstacles. Second, greater clarity regarding EU and national roles and responsibilities in the counter-
terrorism realm would help facilitate engagements among all stakeholders. Third, counter-terrorism is not solely about coordination but also about bringing sufficient capabilities to bear. Europol’s European Counter Terrorism Centre, NATO’s efforts to build partner capabilities, and other initiatives are certainly steps in the right direction, but the scale of these efforts does not appear adequate to current threats, much less potential future threats. Fourth, NATO has significant capabilities to bring to bear to respond to future crisis scenarios, but these capabilities must be exercised and built into robust planning. Ideally, these exercises and plans would include other stakeholder organisations from the EU, as well as partners along the southern Mediterranean. Fifth, anti-crime and counter-terrorist units face significant challenges coordinating their efforts within governments. These challenges increase dramatically in a multinational context. Much greater analysis is required to understand the criminal network–terrorism nexus, and greater cooperation through exercises and integrated planning is needed to cut across traditional stovepipes between law enforcement and military organisations.

Other Challenges: Energy Security and Cyber
Access to and control over energy resources (oil, gas and nuclear) are becoming catalysts of instability in the region with several critical sites falling into the hands of ISIS in the south and east Mediterranean. A key role in today’s world is played by the cyber domain, intended in its broader sense: from data and information security to hybrid warfare, social media, dark webs and more traditional cyber security and warfare. Like the topics above, energy security and cyber cut across all three thematic pillars, as briefly illustrated in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 – Cross-cutting aspects of energy security and cyber issues in the Mediterranean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Energy Security</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategic partnerships built through foreign investments in national energy infrastructure (e.g. Russia building nuclear plant in Egypt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disputes over exploitation of sea-based oil and gas reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Security of supply for Western countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical (energy) infrastructure protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Security of transit for oil and liquid natural gas (LNG) tankers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trafficking in oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Cross-Cutting Insights

Our table in the introduction of this perspective used our analytic framework to summarise some of the key insights derived from our analysis in this Perspective.

In terms of migration, diplomacy has focused on addressing root causes like conflict and weak governance, and is likely crucial to finding long-term solutions. In the nearer term, law enforcement capabilities have been insufficient to the immense tasks at hand and will need to grow both on the ground and at sea. Addressing migration will also require improved intelligence against the criminal networks that prey on migrants and undermine good governance.

In terms of maritime security, a diplomatic surge may be required to effectively engage the full range of stakeholders and focus them on a comprehensive range of concrete steps to address a diverse set of issues ranging from high-seas crime to safety to port security. Maritime presence makes a difference to strengthening maritime security, both in terms of deterring criminal behaviour at sea and sending important political messages to other actors in the region like Russia. Responses to date, in terms of maritime capabilities deployed to the region, have been insufficient, given the extent and diversity of challenges. Criminal networks have grown far beyond human smuggling and now threaten society more broadly by weakening governance through corruption and strengthening more threatening forms of transnational crime.

In terms of counter-terrorism, diplomats have a crucial role building trust among governments and citizens. Counter-terrorism strategies focused on the Mediterranean region have been important first steps, but must advance to comprehensive planning efforts that analyse alternative courses of action and then direct concrete next steps. Law enforcement, working with military and intelligence organisations, must work to overcome anti-crime and counter-terrorism stovepipes.

The challenges in the Mediterranean show no signs of abating. While there have been significant steps taken in the past two years, stovepipes of all kinds continue to exist, between nations and between organisations that deal with diplomacy, security and criminal networks. This Perspective has analysed some of these stovepipes with a particular focus on migration, maritime security and terrorism. While this series of Perspective reports has highlighted some options for policymakers to consider in addressing these challenges and breaking down these stovepipes, much more analysis is required to identify the full range of policy options in these areas, as well as areas such as cyber and energy security.

Both the challenges and the opportunities for collaborative action in and around the Mediterranean are – and will remain – extensive.
References


About the Mediterranean Foresight Forum

Funding for this study was made possible by the independent research and development provisions of RAND’s contracts for the operation of its U.S. Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers. This Perspective is part of a series of four presenting the outcomes of the first phase of the project, which aimed at the identification and consolidation of available information related to current challenges in the Mediterranean Region with a view to identifying drivers of instability and cross-cutting issues requiring multi-dimensional responses. For more information on this Perspective or the project, please visit the project website www.rand.org/randeurope/mff or contact the Project Leader, Dr Giacomo Persi Paoli (giacomo_persi_paoli@rand.org).

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