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# MIGRATION, STATE SECURITY AND REGIONAL STABILITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

On behalf of IOM, I would like to thank the organisers, particularly the Austrian Ministry of Defence, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and the PfP Consortium overall for arranging this important meeting, and for the invitation for IOM to participate.

This forum provides a unique opportunity for IOM to discuss issues related to migration and security with the PfP community. I want to take advantage of this special context to focus not so much on programmes or activities, but more so on what I see as some of the key conceptual and strategic issues. If time allows I will make a few references to projects and programmes toward the end, and the manner in which such initiatives might reinforce the overall strategic elements.

Many of you know IOM well, but perhaps some would benefit from a brief refresher. IOM is an inter-governmental organisation with, currently 105 Member and 27 Observer States, and I want to acknowledge the IOM Member and Observer States in this meeting – nearly all the representations here today. We are not North American, nor Latin American or European, nor African or Asian; we are neither a developed States' organisation nor a developing States' organisation. We are, indeed, truly global and reflective of the diverse points of view as well as the growing common ground on migration issues in the world community. Our headquarters is in Geneva, though by far the largest presence we have is in the field, around the world in our more than 200 offices. At present we have over 4000 operational staff working in over 1200 active projects with a current budgetary value of over US dollars 600 million. While our work on projects is significant, we are both a policy and a project organisation, helping the world community to reflect upon, shape, enact and re-shape cooperative approaches to migration management.

With that preface, I would now like to touch upon the following points in support of our agenda here today: 1) the link, or nexus, between migration and security; and 2) the 'chicken and egg' dilemma concerning the debate on what should come first, democratic governance and structures, or inputs and assistance in the security sector. I will draw a few conclusions, perhaps obvious ones, and if time permits will return to the issue of programming and what capacity-building and technical cooperation in the migration and security area actually means in project terms.

The events of September 11th opened up a new set of challenges for all of us who work in the area of migration – whether we work with governments, international organisations, academic institutions, NGOs or from other bases. We were immediately and dramatically challenged to consider the relationship between migration and terrorism, and between migration and security more generally. The soul-searching and conclusion-reaching was not easy, and in fact continues to this day, though the dust, literally, has long-ago settled on the instigating events.

In this process we, as a community involved in migration management, have learned quite a lot. There has been a great deal of activity in the areas of policy, law, regulation and operations, and perhaps foremost in the area of internal and international government cooperation in those areas where migration management and security management complement one another.

IOM, for our part, has taken lessons from the 11th September events and from the follow-up to those events. We understand our role to be one of assisting all concerned to articulate the common edges between migration and security, and to assist government efforts to put in place more effective practices to ensure that the migration sector is contributing effectively in the overall efforts toward increased security, while providing as well appropriate balance in the areas of the facilitation of normal movement of persons and protection of the vulnerable.

If there is a common understanding that has emerged thus far in the process of examining the migration and security nexus, it is that migration management should not be considered the leading edge in efforts to eliminate terrorism and security threats. However, the area of migration is none the less an essential area for action in this regard. This raises the practical and political issue of how to organise migration management to best contribute to the agenda of improved security and, for all countries but particularly for countries of limited resources and capacities, where best to place investments in the migration sector. Let me take just a couple of minutes to explore those points and draw some preliminary conclusions.

First, how to organise migration management to best contribute to the agenda of improved security. Some of the recent strategic responses in the migration sector to the new security concerns subsume migration within an overall security response, even at times moving migration management into the security portfolio in organisational terms. The U.S. response, integrating most of what was the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) into Homeland Security, can be seen in this light. While this may appear to be entirely new and, to some, somewhat troubling, there is historical precedent.

For example, in the years immediately preceding the United States' entrance into World War II, around 1940, the US INS was moved from the Labor Department into the Department of Justice, which then had the brief for domestic security. The move was explicitly for reasons of national security. Immigration was seen as a means of entry, infiltration and subversion by the enemy. A filter of security, with a very fine mesh, was put in place over the migration sector, with strategies that included fingerprinting of all aliens and requirements to regularly report, among other actions. In retrospect, some of the actions taken were of questionable security value and could not, with history as a judge, be justified. Over time, after the threat subsided, migration management in the U.S. was put back on a more independent and diverse track, but it never lost its relationship with security management and in fact stayed within the Department of Justice until its recent transformation into

Homeland Security – a move which was meant to further strengthen its service to security concerns.

The arguments for caution voiced in the United States at the time the recent reorganisation was being considered[136] parallel in many ways the cautions and concerns that are sometimes heard in regard to the Central Asian countries', and many other developing or transition countries', approaches to migration and security. It was feared that linking migration and security too closely would encourage a culture of fear of the foreign-born, discrimination and even active oppression of groups of persons by race, religion or national origin, and generally a weakening of democratic values and the culture of plurality of the United States. Further, it was feared that much improved operational systems, such as border data and visa application systems, would become tools for enabling discrimination and violations of human rights. Emphasising that "the very purpose of anti-terrorist initiatives is to preserve the fundamental rights and democratic institutions that terrorism seeks to undermine and destroy",[137] some observers made the case that the general trend toward a security-first approach was counterproductive and could become, though inadvertently, supportive of the terrorists' goals.

While these observers in the U.S. and other developed democracies were afraid of regression, in the Central Asian context the argument may be a bit different: that strong action linking migration and security will, for the same reasons, stall progress toward the achievement of cultures of plurality and toward general democratisation. Countering terrorism could provide a dense and convenient cover to maintain or intensify repressive practices of various kinds. Political opposition groups, including those advocating more open and democratic societies, might be conveniently sidelined or silenced as threats to national security. State resources needed for development initiatives could instead be re-directed into the security and military spheres, and foreign assistance might be similarly re-prioritised.

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[136] Meissner, Doris. *After the Attacks: Protecting Borders and Liberties*. Carnegie Endowment Policy Brief. 8 November 2001

[137] *Report on Terrorism and Human Rights*. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States. 22 October 2002

These are all reasonable concerns, and good questions to ask. The difficulty is that the argument can quickly become polarised with, from one side, improved security being seen as antithetical to democratic values and human rights. While from the other side this perceived trade-off is at times acknowledged as unfortunate but necessary. In either case in this polarised perspective, as security advances, democratic values retreat. There are, however, many in the middle, including IOM, trying to balance the equation.

Within this debate the focus of attention is often on issues of political will and national character and values. Concern is expressed about initiatives to build security in the migration sector, and other sectors, in countries that do not have strong democratic traditions. These traditions are at times seen as prerequisite for investment in the security sector. Building democratic culture in the Central Asian and other countries is seen as the first and main challenge. This is not unreasonable, but I would suggest it its only part of the picture or part of the challenge.

Achieving effective security within the migration sphere requires not only the political will, but also the capacity to pursue security in migration effectively. In Central Asia, a good case can be made that, even assuming the political will, the capacities to work in internationally-acceptable ways in this sector are still weak. A heavy-handed approach can be, at times, as much the result of lack of options as lack of will and perspective. Let me provide a couple of examples of how this is played out in the migration sector.

One of the most nettlesome methods of immigration enforcement under recent scrutiny is that of group profiling, whether at borders, in visa application processes or in interior management strategies. Profiling is routinely criticised for its potential to abridge the rights of individuals unfairly, through guilt-by-association. It is instructive, though, that profiling is at times also criticised by law enforcement professionals due to its ineffectiveness. “Many law enforcement professions view profiling

as crude and, ultimately, inadequate substitute for behaviour-based enforcement and effective intelligence gathering."[138]

But to use the better options requires capacity and experience, and countries with fewer resources or less-developed governance and human resource development systems may have limited choices in this regard. Effective intelligence gathering in the migration sphere, which might inform activities against trans-national organised criminal elements in the migration sector (smugglers of arms and illicit goods; traffickers of human beings; and perhaps terrorist cells intermixed with these criminal elements), requires highly trained people and well-supported structures, and well-developed cooperation with neighbouring and other countries. When these are weak or absent, 'traditional' and often heavy-handed approaches, which may also be less effective, will endure out of necessity. Neither democratic values nor national and regional security advances under this scenario.

Another example is in the area of traveller pre-inspection and border checkpoint management. In Central Asia, data systems to support normal traveller inspection are present only at some borders, though major programmes are underway and others are planned, and none of the states to my knowledge has the capacity for Advance Passenger Information/Processing (API/APP) approaches that would allow for pre-screening air passengers before arriving at their air borders. These air borders are important transit points, as well as point of destination. None of the Central Asian countries have Airline Liaison Officers posted abroad at key departure airports. These approaches are in wide use by developed and highly democratic countries, and their judicious use can provide an alternative to unusually broad, group-based screenings and possible exclusions at the air ports-of-entry. Again, a lack of capacity provides an open door for more arbitrary and perhaps heavy-handed enforcement actions at the border. Where capacity and experience is lacking, it becomes difficult to distinguish between lack of political will and lack of means and experience.

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[138] Chishti, Muzaffar. *Immigration and Security Post-Sept. 11*. Migration Policy Institute. 1 August 2002

Allow me to further illustrate the point in relation to green border management, which is probably more important than air border management in Central Asia, with a personal recollection from Afghanistan shortly after the fall of the Taliban regime.

I recall sitting in a sparse basement room in Kabul in a heavily-guarded compound with a senior Afghan official in early 2002, discussing the problems this official had in controlling the green borders. He noted even then that the movement of illicit goods and questionable people across Afghanistan's borders into and from Central Asia was increasing quickly, that this was in his view a threat to civil order, and that he had no real capacity to stop this. He had few staff, at best a handful of vehicles, no equipment and, at that time, his staff had no access to training. He noted that he had had many visitors telling him to please solve the problem. He was willing, even anxious to address these problems but did indeed lack the capacity to do very much. Today, it seems clear that the illicit movement of drugs and malafide persons into and out of Afghanistan, including to and from Central Asia, is a serious security threat. There was, and still is, political will to address this issue, but capacity, though increasing, remains weak. In Afghanistan, as in neighbouring Central Asian countries, if capacity is not strengthened the security threats could very well increase and the nascent democratic structures could be significantly threatened.

In the developed democratic states, approaches to security, including in the migration sector, are based on balanced policy and legal frameworks, and are enacted through robust operational systems. In less-resourced states without strong democratic traditions it is not only the lack of democratic traditions that inhibits appropriate security responses in the migration sector; it is the lack of capacity to handle security in more balanced ways – a lack of alternatives and models, and the means to enact them.

This suggests to me that providing assistance to build migration management systems, inclusive of policy, legal and operational elements should be a major priority. We need to remove lack of capacity from the equation if we are to see clearly where lack of political will and

resistance to democratic values are the main obstacles Building capacities in migration management is part of a process of nation-building. Strongly democratic states have strong intelligence and law enforcement systems. Weakness in security does not necessarily correlate with higher standards in human rights or democratic governance.

To encourage democratisation alongside improved security, then, implies focusing strong attention on capacity building in selected areas of migration management. Capabilities in the right areas can provide options to using approaches that are, at least, questionable.

Central Asia's role in regional and international cooperation to combat terrorism is particularly important. It is not just another region of the world that needs attention; it is a region in close proximity to known threats and is, at the same time, a region with limited capacities to take effective national action and to support sophisticated partnerships in joint security management. While there may be places where political will is lacking, the primary obstacle in many locales is that of capacity and the lack of sustained support to development of that capacity. What we, at IOM, see in the migration sector in this regard may be representative of the overall governance situation.

I would encourage, then, continuing and intensifying a process of engagement and monitoring, and in fact this is the approach in Central Asia from most partners or donors. In that sense, my message is that we, the international community including the Central Asian governments, are, increasingly, doing this right in that region. It is unrealistic and counter-productive to link the initiation of capacity building investments in migration and security with the a priori achievement of high democratic standards. Rather the process of engagement through capacity building and technical cooperation activities should serve to build trust and confidence toward the achievement of the broader governance goals. The process of engagement also presents opportunities for evaluation and monitoring of the use of new capacities, which can inform the broader democratisation initiatives. Security can certainly be a prerequisite for democratic reform and growth.

Democratic reform can not always be a prerequisite for measured investments in security.

I have not, in this paper, discussed another important area of migration management linked with security: that of economic development. IOM has long viewed migration and development as intimately linked. Clearly economic pressures fuel much of the world's migration, both regular and irregular. Similarly, development issues are increasingly being linked with prevention of terrorism. The rationale for addressing development concerns from a migration perspective are reinforced by this connection: enhancing economic and community development in areas of high migration pressure is reasonable not only from the point of view of reducing pressures for irregular migration, and reducing the strength of smuggling and trafficking networks, but is also reasonable as a prophylactic measure to prevent the rise of disaffected groups that may be prone to enter into terrorist activities.

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsored an excellent research report on the use of development cooperation as a tool in preventing terrorism.[139] I would recommend that those of you who have not seen it take a close look at this report. It can provide a useful basis for broader discussions on the links between nation building and human security in Central Asia and other parts of the world.

Let me close now with brief reference to the issue of programming and what capacity-building and technical cooperation in the migration and security area actually means in programme and project terms. IOM works in this sector primarily through the following kinds of initiatives: 1) Strengthening border systems, including the entry/exit data systems and the 'business process' used to manage border checkpoints; 2) Providing technical guidance and support to the improvement of travel documents and their issuance systems, particularly passports; 3) Building national capacities in the area of staff training and human

[139] Kivimäki,Timo. *Development cooperation as an instrument in the prevention of terrorism: Research Report.* Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Copenhagen. July 2003 (for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark)

resource development in relevant Ministries and Departments; 4) Providing technical support and assistance to combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, including enhancing immigration service and law enforcement capacities to investigate these phenomena; 5) Enabling technical cooperation and policy planning between and among the involved states in sub-regions, and between the concerned regions; 6) Providing technical support to the development of new policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to support this sector; and, on the preventative side, 7) Providing programmes that enhance economic and community development in areas of high migration pressure.

I want to note as well the approach IOM undertook when launching this general programme framework in the former Soviet Union in the mid-1990s. While we were pursing and encouraging the development of many of the noted governmental capacities, we understood the importance of encouraging the role of civil society in balancing and augmenting the governments' direct roles in migration management.

During that time we launched, in parallel to the government capacity building programmes, NGO capacity building programmes in the migration sector. Our goal was to encourage and enable NGOs to take on the normal advocacy, research and direct service roles that civil society normally fulfils in the migration sector. It is important and sensible, wherever possible, to build both capacities together – governmental and civil society.

Our programming approach also included then, and still does, the development sector: working to improve economic and social conditions in areas of high migration pressure. Micro-enterprise and employment-linked training projects, and projects to ensure basic community infrastructure, generally characterise these programmes in the former Soviet Union and in other parts of the world.
Migration as a theme is closely linked with many of the issues of concern to the Consortium's Study Groups. I hope that these comments will prove helpful in advancing the agenda and the overall goal of the

Study Groups, and provide a basis for further discussion of migration within the PfP processes.

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