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## Which Crisis? Understanding and Addressing Migration

by Andrea Dessì



### ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the proceedings of an international conference convened in the framework of the New-Med Research Network in Athens on 16 December 2016. Organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), the event was hosted at the offices of the Representation of the European Commission in Greece and involved the participation of invited experts from a variety of backgrounds to discuss a number of migration-related issues. Approaching them from different Mediterranean perspectives, experts debated various definitions of the “migrant and refugee crisis,” examined the hardships and psychological traumas affecting migrants attempting to reach Europe and the European Union’s uneven response to the crisis. Structured around a keynote speech and two panel sessions, the conference benefited from the input and support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin.

*European Union | Mediterranean | Migration | Refugees*



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by Andrea Dessì\*

## Introduction

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) organized an international conference on migration in Athens, Greece, on 16 December 2016. Invited experts were drawn from a mixture of academics, researchers and policymakers from all sides of the Mediterranean basin, and called to comment on the migrant and refugee crisis currently unfolding in the region. Hosted at the headquarters of the Representation of the European Commission in Athens, participants discussed different definitions and perceptions of migrants and refugees, debated European Union (EU) migration policies and explored some of the root causes and potential solutions to the current crises affecting the Mediterranean. Convened in the framework of the ongoing New-Med Research Network, the event was made possible through the support of various governmental and non-governmental entities including the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) and the Compagnia San Paolo of Turin.

Launched in 2014, the New-Med Research Network aims to develop a network of analysts, practitioners and research centres from both sides of the Mediterranean to foster dialogue on contemporary security trends in the region. Within this framework, the Network also aims to create formal avenues for cooperation in support of the objectives of the OSCE-Mediterranean Partnership. Since its inception, the New-Med Network has organised fourteen international conferences and published thirty research papers on various themes surrounding Euro-Med

\* Andrea Dessì is Researcher within the Mediterranean and Middle East programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and PhD candidate in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The views and opinions expressed in this report are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any agency or individual. Errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the author.

· Report of the international conference "Which 'Crisis'? Understanding and Addressing Migration" held in Athens on 16 December 2016 and jointly organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) within the framework of the New-Med Research Network.

relations.<sup>1</sup> In this context, New-Med activities have focussed extensively on the topic of migration, publishing a number of policy papers, reports and an edited volume containing a collection of studies on the current migration and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup>

Entitled "Which 'Crisis'? Understanding and Addressing Migration", the international conference in Athens coincided with the last European Council meeting of 2016, where, among other issues, EU leaders discussed recent developments tied to the migrant and refugee crisis.<sup>3</sup> Held on 15 December 2016, the European Council meeting expressed support for new agreements with third-countries in Africa (the so-called "migration compacts") as a means to limit new arrivals to Europe and seek to tackle the root causes of migration along the central Mediterranean route. Further discussion focused on the need to fully implement the March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement on migration, including through increased support for Greece and other Balkan states and continued talks with Turkey on visa liberalization. Debate also took place on the best means to assist migrant origin and transit countries with border control and anti-smuggling operations, economic assistance and incentives to help provide opportunities to allow potential migrants to find employment and sustenance in their home countries.

The Council's conclusions served as a fitting backdrop for the New-Med conference in Athens. Participants and invited speakers addressed the Council's conclusions in detail, contributing to a lively and informative debate on the root causes of the crises, the EU's uneven response to migration and asylum seekers and the significant humanitarian, security, political and economic challenges linked to the current crisis in the Mediterranean. Structured around a keynote speech and two panel sessions, the one-day conference was open to the public and benefitted from the attendance of local and international media, embassy representatives, academics, researchers and concerned citizens.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the New-Med Research Network, including access to published papers and past events, please visit the IAI website, <http://www.iai.it/en/node/2004>. See also the OSCE website: <http://www.osce.org/networks/newmedtrackII>. Past conference reports include: Andrea Dessì, "A Multilateral Approach to Ungoverned Spaces: Libya and Beyond", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 15|10 (June 2015), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/4262>; Andrea Dessì, "Radicalisation in the Mediterranean Region: Old and New Drivers", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 15|27 (December 2015), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5747>; Andrea Dessì, "Re-Ordering the Middle East? Peoples, Bordes and States in Flux", in *Documenti IAI*, No.16|11 (July 2016), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/6677>.

<sup>2</sup> Paola Monzini, Nourhan Abdel Aziz and Ferruccio Pastore, *The Changing Dynamics of CrossBorder Human Smuggling and Trafficking in the Mediterranean*, Rome, IAI, October 2015, <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5522>; Lorenzo Kamel (ed.), *Changing Migration Patterns in the Mediterranean*, Rome, Nuova Cultura, November 2015 (IAI Research Papers 22), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5702>.

<sup>3</sup> European Council, *European Council Conclusions* (EUCO 34/16), 15 December 2016, <http://europa.eu/!Qn94Rg>.

Welcoming remarks were delivered by **Thanos Dokos**, Director-General of ELIAMEP, who opened the conference by giving a general overview of the topics under discussion. Dokos highlighted the timeliness and urgency of the conference, expressing his appreciation to the organisers and New-Med partners that made the event possible. In noting the joint Italian-Greek sponsorship of the conference, Dokos emphasised that it is no coincidence that two front-line European countries join forces to address the pressing challenge of migration. Both Italy and Greece have been deeply affected by the migration crisis and both have repeatedly called on Europe and EU institutions to do more to address the challenge. While the EU-Turkey deal has alleviated some of the pressure on Greece,<sup>4</sup> much work remains to be done to help authorities in Athens register refugees, provide adequate assistance and process asylum applications in a more efficient and timely manner. Latest data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) show how refugee flows across the Mediterranean in 2016 have remained steady, moving from the Eastern Mediterranean route to the Central European one following the conclusion of the EU-Turkey deal and the building of land barriers in many Balkan and Eastern European states. A total of 173,561 migrants reached Greece by sea in 2016 and 181,436 Italy according to IOM figures.<sup>5</sup> In highlighting the significant social, economic, humanitarian and political challenges stemming from these arrivals, Dokos concluded by reminding the audience that talking of a European migrant crisis is somewhat misleading, given that it is countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) that have so far born the brunt of the refugee and migrant crisis.



From left to right: Massimo Carnelos, Thanos Dokos, Panos Carvounis, Lorenzo Kamel

**Lorenzo Kamel**, Scientific Coordinator of the New-Med Research Network and IAI Senior Fellow, joined Thanos Dokos in delivering opening remarks. By providing an historical frame to the issue of migration, Kamel stressed that the movement of people represents a constant theme throughout time and space. All countries and societies have been affected, and in many cases built on migration, with culture, the arts, scientific knowledge and understanding benefitting enormously from these exchanges. The current fear of migrants in Europe, in both a hard

<sup>4</sup> See *Operational Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement* (as of 12 January 2017), available on the European Agenda on Migration webpage as the latest "State of Play – EU-Turkey Agreement Implementation": <http://europa.eu/!YC64jH>. See also European Commission, *Fourth Report on the Progress made in the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement* (COM/2016/792), 8 December 2016, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52016DC0792>.

<sup>5</sup> IOM, *Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Top 363,348 in 2016; Deaths at Sea: 5,079*, 6 January 2017, <http://www.iom.int/node/79932>.

security sense and in terms of socio-cultural diversity and economic opportunities, is therefore largely ahistorical and connected to the fact that, in Zygmunt Bauman's words, we tend to be "a culture of forgetting, not learning". It is also largely self-defeating, given that erecting walls and signing externalization agreements – such as the one agreed between UE and Niger last December – won't result in stifling the movement of people and will continue to fail to differentiate between people in search of international protection from other migrants.



Thanos Dokos, Panos Carvounis, Lorenzo Kamel

In thanking ELIAMEP and the New-Med partners for co-organizing the conference, Kamel concluded by highlighting the multidisciplinary approach that has become a key feature of New-Med activities. Bringing academics and researchers together with diplomatic practitioners, civil society actors and media representatives to discuss and debate pressing themes tied to Euro-Med relations has proven an effective formula to build bridges and understand these challenges from different perspectives. The title of the conference, "Which Crisis?" reflects this spirit, and participants will seek to unpack and problematize the current debate on migration while simultaneously exploring policy recommendations and proposals to improve current EU migration policies.

Introductory remarks by **Panos Carvounis**, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Greece, opened the formal proceedings at the conference. Carvounis began by emphasising how the migration "crisis" is both humanitarian and political, a complex and multidimensional challenge that can only be addressed through common and comprehensive long-term strategies adopted at the EU level. Noting how the EU aims to rollout a comprehensive migration strategy, Carvounis emphasised the twin concepts of solidarity and responsibility that must remain at the centre of the EU approach. Europe must continue to be a safe haven for people suffering from war and persecution, noted the diplomat, who stressed that the over 10 billion-euro EU budget for the migration crisis also included 1 billion euros for Greece. Over 1,000 people from numerous EU agencies are working in Greece to help tackle the migration challenge with the European Commission coordinating all activities on the ground.

Turning to the EU-Turkey deal, Carvounis described the agreement as an unprecedented new form of cooperation, which has succeeded in pushing down daily arrivals in Greece to about 90 people a day from well over 1,000 at the height of the crisis. The situation is still critical, and as winter sets in there is an increasing risk of a humanitarian crisis. In Greece, the Islands are overcrowded and migrants cannot be moved to the mainland, as they would then fall outside the scope of

the EU-Turkey agreement and no longer be eligible for repatriation under its terms. Acknowledging the results of the European Council's conclusions, Carvounis emphasised that the challenges for refugees do not end with their arrival to Europe. Efforts must be redoubled at both the national and supranational level to promote integration and create opportunities for new migrants once they reach the EU.



Opening Session

**Massimo Carnelos** from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) joined the EU diplomat in introducing the conference, emphasising how Italy has been on the front lines – figuratively and literally – of the migration challenge in both its EU and Mediterranean contexts. Italy has sought to promote a positive agenda on migration and tabled the “Migration Compact” proposal to seek to tackle the root causes and push factors in origin countries through investments, assistance and other EU incentives.<sup>6</sup> Combatting illegal trafficking and smuggling also figure prominently in Italy's priorities. In emphasising the permanence of the problem of migration, Carnelos talked about how the Mediterranean is itself a metaphor for multiculturalism and even of the broader phenomenon of globalization. The movement of peoples and ideas has been key to the building of the European experience, culture and society, stressed the Italian diplomat who warned that south-north migration routes are only likely to increase in the future in light of climate change, political turmoil and socio-economic hardships.

In thanking the organizers and broader New-Med Research Network, Carnelos anticipated that 2017 is set to be a very important and demanding year for the Italian government. Migration will be placed at centre stage of Italy's Presidency of the G7 and chairmanship of the OSCE Mediterranean Group in 2017. The upcoming anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome in March 2017, while a key opportunity to re-launch the broader EU integration project, will also serve as an opportunity to shine a light on the migration challenge as a key dimension of EU integration. Italy, both independently, through its humanitarian efforts to save lives in the Mediterranean, and collectively at the EU and larger United Nations (UN) levels, will continue to promote action on the issue of migration. Yet efficient and sustainable policies can only come about through increased coordination and burden sharing. A truly comprehensive strategy will necessitate a multidimensional approach that addresses the political, economic, cultural and security dimensions of the crisis, concluded the Italian representative.

<sup>6</sup> Italian Government, *Migration Compact: Contribution to an EU Strategy for External Action on Migration*, 15 April 2016, <http://www.governo.it/node/4509>.

### Keynote speech

**Hassan Hakimian**, Director of the Middle East Institute at SOAS University of London, delivered a compelling presentation on migration and the dangers of populism and nationalism in Europe and beyond. Making a passionate case for a “rediscovery” of the benefits of economic migration, Hakimian set out to challenge the widely held notion that migrants are an economic burden for destination countries, diminishing opportunities for the national population. Pointing to how the term “economic migrant” has increasingly assumed negative connotations in Europe, the speaker emphasised that economic migrants are being denigrated and framed through a narrative of fear and mistrust. This is in turn fuelling populism and nationalism across the continent, as immigration has become prominent topic in many populist slogans across Europe and beyond. In this context there is a need to examine, and reaffirm, the economic benefits of migration that have increasingly been overshadowed by the current atmosphere of “urgency” and “crisis” in Europe.

Entitled “Lost in Translation? Restating the Case for Economic Migration”, Hakimian’s talk examined how current discourse on immigration, both in the media and in policymaking circles, has been overcome by a sense of urgency, fear and crisis that bodes ill for the chances of an efficient, long-term response to the challenge. Increased efforts to differentiate between economic migrants and refugees can be understandable given the urgent need to provide aid and assistance to people fleeing violence and war. However the economic benefits that stem from migration, which have largely been ignored in light of the current climate, should not be overlooked and deserve greater attention. “Somewhere in between the need to address the refugees’ urgent need for protection at one extreme and the populist backlash against it, the point about the significance and benefits of economic migration has been lost”, noted Hakimian in introducing his argument.

From India to Japan, the United States (US) and Europe, Russia, Turkey and the Philippines, there is little doubt that the populist upsurge has become an internationalized phenomenon. Much of the populist backlash has fed off exaggerated fears about immigrant waves and insurmountable cultural, security and financial costs. Nationalist and neo-isolationist tendencies are again emerging, with numerous walls being built across Europe, in many cases in clear violation of international norms and treaties on migration and asylum rights. In the case of the United Kingdom, data analysis has shown how fear of migrants and immigration became a prominent driver for the Leave vote in the Brexit referendum, while the electoral campaign of Donald Trump in the US has also relied heavily on such demonising of migrants, particularly Muslims and those from Mexico.

There is little doubt that the migrant and refugee crisis is real and urgent. There are currently more displaced people and refugees than ever before. Globally, about 30,000 people are newly displaced internally everyday (amounting to 11 million in 2014) and 4.8 million Syrians’ have migrated to neighbouring countries as a result

of the war (650,000 of which have reached Europe). In a record-breaking year, by the end of 2014, 38 million people had become displaced within their own country, with 11 million uprooted in the single year. In these present circumstances and amidst all the talk of a European migration “crisis,” it is clear that the perspective remains focussed on the receiving countries, while the plight of the refugees is largely ignored. There is an urgent and growing need to develop comprehensive national and global protection systems for refugees that uphold human rights and the principle of free movement. The debate however seems stuck between extremes, giving a false choice between immigration control and a complete absence of controls, thereby distorting the argument and limiting the scope of debate.

Turning to the issue of economic migrants and the spread of anti-immigrant discourse, Hakimian outlined a philosophical, historical and economic rebuke to these narratives. Pointing to the tendency to exaggerate short-term costs of accepting and integrating economic migrants, Hakimian emphasised that a human’s desire to better his or herself through migration and relocation is a fundamental tenant of the modern capitalist system, of globalization and mainstream economics. An asymmetry between the concept of freedom of movement of capital and freedom of movement of labour, among other aspects, is visible, but approaching the issue of migration from a philosophical perspective one should appreciate how migration and the free movement of individuals has long been considered a fundamental tenant of “progress,” modernization and the neoliberal world. Adopting a historical perspective, Hakimian turned the attention to how history offers numerous examples of the benefits of economic migration. Recent countries such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia have all benefitted enormously for migration flows. More recently, the significant strides made by the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have also rested on huge numbers of migrants and labourers; both in the high-paid and skilled areas of the economy and in the lower-wage sectors of construction and the service market.

These experiences need to receive greater focus in the international and European debate on migration. Numerous studies have highlighted the two-way benefits that flow from the phenomenon. For example, and contrary to the wave of paranoia and fear mongering surrounding the Brexit referendum in the UK, data shows how European migrants in the country have made a net positive contribution exceeding 2.5 billion pounds during 2010-14 (income tax and national insurance contributions net of benefits and welfare support received) and that as high as one-third of EU migrants in the UK returned home after less than a year.<sup>7</sup> In the US, immigrants account for 13 percent of the population but made-up for 26 percent of all entrepreneurs and about 36 percent of new firms have at least one immigrant in the leadership team. Another important dimension of economic migration is

<sup>7</sup> Hassan Hakimian, “Kicking away the migration ladder?”, in *The Middle East in London*, Vol. 12, No 4 (June-July 2016), p. 13-14, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/meil/recent-issues/file115368.pdf>.



the support it provides to home countries through remittances and/or repatriation after having obtained skills and experience abroad. This must not be overlooked, as remittances and returning migrants often prove essential to the development of the economy and sustenance of the family nucleus in their home countries. In 2012 remittances from immigrants living abroad amounted 400 billion dollars, four times the amount of aid flows.

Hakimian challenged the notion of there being a direct causal link between economic hardship and the rise of populism. Noting how the rise of protectionist and anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe and the United States are widely attributed to stagnant incomes, inequality and structural unemployment, Hakimian stressed that it is the *perception* of economic hardship or decline that is often more important than the reality. Citing electoral analyses from the recent Brexit vote, one can see how young people under the age of 35, those who are most affected by job market and competition, overwhelmingly voted Remain, by a margin of 65 to 35 percent. Pensioners, meanwhile, voted Leave by 60 percent, while 53 percent of full-time workers and 51 percent of part-time workers voted Remain.

In citing recent data analyses by the BBC and other sources, Hakimian noted how one of the strongest indicators of a Leave voter was their support for capital punishment. Other important variables were the non-possession of a Passport and residing in areas with lowest levels of migrants, figures that would seem to contradict the thesis of a direct economic threat from incoming migrants. In the current climate of a “post-truth world,” the populist narrative is unlikely to be successfully challenged by citing facts and economic data alone. In the battle of perceptions the approach must be multilateral, long-term and multipronged. This is unlikely in light of the present political climate in Europe. Short-term political gain is today the number one priority of politicians and parties. The need to win votes and satisfy one’s political base at home is preventing the discussion of long-term strategies to help migrants, refugees and the national citizens themselves. The internationalization of populism and the rise of protectionism and xenophobic tendencies are serious and worrying phenomena. If left unchecked they hold a real potential of undermining democratic societies concluded the speaker, who acknowledged that only communal EU-wide strategies stand a chance of providing some success in moving towards a more balanced and tolerant approach to migration.

### Session I: Understanding the migration and refugee crisis

The first session of the conference saw three panellists discuss and problematize what the media has termed the “migrant and refugee crisis.” Examining the humanitarian, political and policy dimensions of the “crisis” from the perspective of both sides of the Mediterranean, the session was chaired by **Dia Anagnostou** from the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens and Senior Research Fellow at ELIAMEP.

Contextualizing the topic into what she termed a much broader “crisis of humanity,” **Michelle Pace**, from the Roskilde University in Denmark, opened the session by recalling how Greek mythology traces Europe’s own origins to the Eastern Mediterranean. It was Zeus, most notably in the form of a white Bull, who is said to have abducted the mythical Europa and brought her across the Mediterranean to form European civilization. Europe, therefore, is itself built on a common history of exile and a sense of having a home away from home. Populations are mixed and everyone, through generations, is a migrant in different lands. Today, however, we are witnessing unprecedented levels of antagonism and discrimination against migrants both at the public and political level.

Addressing the EU-Turkey deal, Pace criticised the agreement for transforming human beings and migrants into political currency and using, or exchanging, them for political gain. The narrative that the deal is necessary and externalization agreements must be pursued because Europe has reached max capacity is simply not true. The need for effective and communal mechanisms for asylum and hospitality, both at the borders of the EU and within national states, should instead be the priority. Yet, rising nationalisms and populisms, and a gradual process of disenchantment with democracy and democratic principles in many European societies, particularly among the youth, are the worrying trends. This de-democratization is affecting both society and politics and is by no means limited to Europe. To address these trends education, good journalism and teaching the humanities were described as indispensable to counter this general cultural and horizontal decline in Europe.

In concluding her talk, Pace noted how migrants must be better assisted once relocation into a European member state occurs. Integration, training and education are key components of this process and many European states are far behind in these practices. This also applies to Denmark, often portrayed as a model welfare state, where the political debate has become increasingly racist and intolerant. In citing a Danish Dance Project as an example of a successful programme in which recent migrants share classes with the local community, the speaker noted how often it is isolation and a lack of contact with the native population that undermines the integration process, harming both the migrant and the local community. In this respect, the example of Canada was advanced as a more humane model of migration policy, one where migrants are treated with greater respect and where the broader culture around migration and multiculturalism is different than in Europe.

Thanking the audience and New-Med organizers Michelle Pace passed the floor to **Efrat Ben Ze’ev**, from the Department of Behavioural Science at the Ruppin Academic Centre in Israel, who presented an anthropological viewpoint on the plight of migrants and refugees. Ben Ze’ev focussed on the specific experience of migrants travelling from Eritrea, through Sudan, Egypt the Sinai and into Israel. The presentation was based on the results of a larger research project conducted by the Ruppin Academic Centre focussed on the social construction of borders and was structured around the personal experience of a single migrant who recounted

his harrowing journey. The presentation emphasised the traumatic experience of migrants, the psychological and physical hardships of the journey and the often-overlooked challenge of having to repeatedly mask or mimic one's identity in order to retain the chance of employment and survival. The repeated "donning" and "shedding" of identities has a significant psychological impact on migrants, who often travel on foot and for many years on end, becoming exposed to persecution, violence and starvation along the road.

The plight of Eritrean migrants in Israel is particularly revealing, noted the speaker, who emphasised that out of a total of over 7,500 asylum applications only seven were granted by the Israeli government. This means that the great majority of Eritreans are not provided with any legal means of immigrating to Israel, where they remain labelled as "infiltrators" and "illegal migrants" by the authorities. This labelling furthers the need of many Eritrean migrants to mask and hide their identity, essentially meaning that the psychological trauma of shedding and donning continues once these migrants finally reach Israel. Having escaped war, economic hardship and persecution in their home countries, these migrants experience harrowing mistreatment at the hands of smugglers and human traffickers, where again they are essentially stripped of any humanity and rights. Providing a first-hand account of these experiences, Ben Ze'ev's presentation humanized the plight of migrants, a dimension that is often overlooked in more technical or policy-oriented discussions of the topic. In this important respect, Ben Ze'ev emphasised that giving the issue a human face is essential in order to counter generalizations and intolerant discourse. Citing a recent study conducted in Israel, Ben Ze'ev stressed that the rates of violence among migrant communities in the country are actually well below those of the native population. Educating citizens, fostering the intermingling with migrant communities and encouraging integration programmes are key to countering misinformation and fear mongering on the supposed migrant "threat," concluded Ben Ze'ev.

The final speaker in the first session of the conference, **Angeliki Dimitriadi**, Research Fellow at ELIAMEP and an expert on European social policy and migration, took the floor emphasising that Europe is presently experiencing a *number* of "crises." When it comes to the so-called migrant and refugee "crisis," the speaker stressed that this "crisis" is mostly of our own making. Europe is moreover currently experiencing what may be termed a "crisis of terminology" as much discussion is directed at ascertaining the correct labelling of migrants. Is someone a "migrant" or a "refugee"? Experiencing "forced" or "voluntary" migration?, asked the speaker who went on to note that the ways in which these terminologies are applied often have more to do with our own collective psychology than with the migrants themselves. In particular, Dimitriadi, wished to emphasise what she described as an especially worrying phenomenon in which the labelling of migrant vs. refugee often takes place well before the migrant arrives in Europe on the simple basis of his/her nationality, essentially becoming a sort of ethnic profiling that is incompatible with European values and laws.

In moving to address a second dimension of the so-called “crisis,” Dimitriadi emphasised that Europe is currently experiencing a very serious crisis of its border control regime. While this may be understandable to some extent given the way in which the EU is constructed and the significant rise in the number of arrivals over the past years, the crisis was by no means unpredictable and European institutions and member states should have been more prepared to deal with its ramifications. When it comes to border control and communal responses to migration, no real improvements have been made. Today, there essentially exist no legal and regulated avenues for migrants to reach Europe and the “solidarity” principle that EU institutions’ often refer to is in very limited supply. Many front-line European countries are left to deal with significant influxes of unregulated migrants with their own devices, meaning that certain countries are skirting their responsibilities.

Turning to the experience of Greece, Dimitriadi acknowledged that the country is experiencing a significant management crisis as a result of the numbers of migrant and refugee arrivals. Registration, background checks and asylum processing times are way beyond what is acceptable and this is contributing to a significant overcrowding of Greek Islands, with all the consequences this entails such as straining societal relations and worsening humanitarian conditions. Today, and as the winter sets in, the crisis is likely to worsen further. Yet, again, the crisis is largely of our own making, given that we all knew that winter was fast approaching and that troubles would increase as a result. Preparation and increased assistance from other European countries and the EU is necessary. One has to wonder, noted the speaker, where the 1 billion euro in funds given by the EU to address the Greek migrant crisis have been spent and why, if the total number of migrants in Greece is only about 50-60,000, the authorities and broader EU cannot seem to manage the “crisis” more effectively.

Finally, in concluding her argument, the speaker noted that this is likely to be the “century of migration” and that flows of migrants and refugees are not likely to end any time soon. In this respect, the EU and the international community need to respond to the challenge by addressing the asymmetries in our understanding and labelling of migrants. The climate of fear, “crisis” and protectionism that Europe is experiencing today has allowed politicians and institutions to promote and implement a whole series of laws and provisions that in the recent past would have been unthinkable. The securitization of migration, building of walls and the implementation of externalization agreements with what are often authoritarian third countries are unprecedented policies that actually contravene the laws and principles on which the EU was founded. This important dimension of the “crisis,” and the feelings of urgency and fear that have surrounded debates on migration, are weakening Europe from within and can only result in short-term prescriptions that could actually worsen the next crisis, from both a political, humanitarian and socio-economic standpoint, concluded the speaker.

### Session II: Solutions to the migration governance crisis

The second session of the conference was chaired by **Panagiotis Tsakonas** from the University of the Aegean in Athens, and saw the participation of four speakers from a number of academic institutions, think tanks and supranational institutions. Focussing on the specific governance dimension of the so-called European “refugee and migrant crisis,” experts discussed the various strengths and weaknesses of EU migration policy, the impact of externalisation agreements and efforts aimed at containing the flows away from Europe’s borders. Examining border management and integration policies, speakers in the conference questioned whether the current “crisis” will lead the EU to overcome a number of structural weaknesses and favour the emergence of a more coordinated and cooperative approach to migration.

The first speaker in the session, **Emiliano Alessandri**, from the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, outlined how the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has recently enhanced its focus on the issue of migration. Recent reports and factsheets published by the Organization highlight both the urgency of the issue for many member states and the complexity of reaching common understandings on how best to tackle the challenge. In February 2016, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) established an Ad Hoc Committee on Migration. The Committee serves as a focal point for activities conducted by the Parliamentary Assembly in the field of migration and cover all dimensions of OSCE’s focus: politics and security; economic issues; human rights and humanitarian questions. As an organization based on unanimous decisions, OSCE’s publications and statements on migration tend to be a mixed bag, made up of various interpretations and perspectives on the challenge. While sometimes problematic, OSCE’s wide membership and the well-respected reputation enjoyed by the organization, make it a valuable forum to explore avenues for consensus building and the exchange of best practices, approaches that will be key to the fashioning of new multilateral policies to tackle the issue of migration.

Moving to address the current climate in Europe and the growing debate surrounding the definitions of economic migrants vs. political refugees, Alessandri expressed his opinion that such binary approaches are not necessarily helpful. The dichotomy between security and humanitarian approaches, between open and closed borders and “forced” or “voluntary” migration often distorts the debate, preventing a clear ascertaining of policies needed to address the problem. Ultimately, emphasised the speaker, it is a *political* solution that is necessary (but lacking) and this will by definition need to be a compromise between different interests and concerns. Political solutions will not be able to please every standpoint on the issue and will have to balance humanitarian, cultural, electoral and security concerns, all of which are affected by the challenge. Beyond romantic portrayals of us “all being migrants,” Alessandri emphasised that politics, diplomatic negotiations and debate is what will ultimately be needed. In calling for a broadening of categories and definitions of refugees and migrants to also

account for changing international realities and push factors, the speaker noted how increasing numbers of migrants are not fleeing war or conflict *per se*, but forced to move do to them having the misfortune of living in so-called “failed” or “weak” states, due to environmental degradation and climate change and other similar issues that do not fit evenly in the “political refugee” category. These trends are predicted to continue and probably worsen over the next decades, essentially making the “crisis” a permanent one. In noting how refugees and organized crime are two issues that have grown increasingly intertwined, Alessandri stressed that a more comprehensive approach is needed and that both of these phenomena are traceable to the root governance and political weakness of many states in Europe’s broader neighbourhood.

Turning to address European history, Alessandri noted how the European experience is increasingly associated with human rights, integration and peaceful negotiations, but in reality it is also the history of war, mass killings and the Holocaust. Much of the political history of the continent has been defined by efforts aimed at drawing and redrawing borders, deciding “who stays in” and “who is left out” of these national boundaries. What is different today is the general domestic and international context. Societal changes in Europe and the slowing down of the broader European integration project are two dimensions of these changes, as are growing popular disillusionment with collectivism, common solutions and declining trust in so-called “elites” and “experts.” In this context, European societies have also become more structured, differentiated and regulated by national authorities. National IDs, pensions, income taxes and a whole series of laws and regulations have been introduced to structure these complex societies and it is clear that these regulations are coming under increased strain in light of migration influxes.

In political terms, the EU’s response to the “crisis” focussed first on resolving the emergency; then moved to discuss and weigh the political implications of the challenge and only finally, after quite some time, new rules and regulations are developed. In this context, there is a need to expand and widen the definition of migrants, refugees and migration and to do so on the basis of reliable data and information. A greater focus should also be given to political developments in North African countries, and Europe should avoid becoming complacent with these regimes, focussing excessively on origin countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Addressing Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Alessandri stressed that countries cannot use migrant flows to score political points domestically and at the EU level and that ultimately, only joint approaches can hope to address the migration challenge in Europe. In this context, there also needs to be a better and agreed upon definition of failed and weak states, a means to allow refugees and migrants from these countries to also be eligible for assistance and asylum, instead of forcing them into illegal migration flows.

**Rosa Balfour**, Acting Director of the Europe Programme at the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), introduced her talk by outlining her experiences in Brussels interviewing officials and researching the EU’s response to the “migrant

and refugee crisis.” The so-called “migrant crisis” was quickly transformed into a EU governance crisis with serious implications for the survival of the European project. EU officials and institutions were indeed in a “crisis mode,” as the stakes were high and there was a real feeling that the whole EU project could crumble if the situation persisted. Agreeing with previous speakers, Balfour emphasised that so-called “EU solidarity” was hard to come by and that the number one priority of EU officials was simply on bringing down the number of migrants arriving in Europe, particularly through the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes.

In this context, the EU debate was fully focussed on the domestic political implications of the crisis and its impact on the wider EU project. It is in this context that the EU rushed to conclude the agreement with Turkey in March 2016 as a means to diminish the influx of migrants and grant politicians and EU institutions some breathing room vis-à-vis their respective constituencies. The EU-Turkey Statement was welcomed in the EU for these reasons, and while flows did decline there was little or no mention of the grave humanitarian consequences of these actions, particularly in light of the significant increase of migrants drowning along the Central Mediterranean route. The EU has rationalized and ultimately justified this compromise on its values and principles for the sake of domestic political considerations and the wider survival of the EU project. Yet it is clear, emphasised the speaker that the only way for Europe to survive and flourish in the future is through a common approach. This includes the migration challenge, but also other issues such as climate change and the EU’s foreign and security policy more broadly. These common approaches must be based on long-term strategies, not on the short-term political considerations of individual politicians or member states. While domestic political constraints will necessarily be present, there is a great need for the EU to overcome its internal divisions and develop an agreeable strategy for its external projection.

Returning to outline the EU’s response to the “crisis,” Balfour noted how, following the conclusion of the EU-Turkey deal in March, it was only in June that the foreign policy dimension of the migration crisis truly came into focus in Brussels. It was at this time that major EU institutions – such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the various EU aid agencies – move to adopt a more visible emphasis on the challenge. In this respect, the EU announced a number of Partnership Frameworks on migration with such countries as Jordan, Lebanon, Mali and Ethiopia among others in an effort to enhance the incentives and cooperative agreements with key origin and transit countries.<sup>8</sup> In the Council Conclusions

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the EU Partnership Frameworks see, European Commission, *Managing the Refugee Crisis. A New Partnership Framework*, 7 June 2016, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/20160607/factsheet\\_managing\\_refugee\\_crisis\\_new\\_partnership\\_framework\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/20160607/factsheet_managing_refugee_crisis_new_partnership_framework_en.pdf); European Commission, *Commission Announces New Migration Partnership Framework: Reinforced Cooperation with Third Countries to better Manage Migration*, 7 June 2016, <http://europa.eu/ljw93nR>.

in June,<sup>9</sup> Balfour noted how the emphasis was placed on negative conditionality, with the EU essentially threatening sanctions and diminished developmental aid to extract concessions and cooperation from these countries. Following this, in the Council Conclusions of October,<sup>10</sup> there was a slight reversal, with the language moving away from negative conditionality to emphasise shared approaches and positive financial incentives. Yet, there are significant risks entailed in the EU establishing partnership agreements for repatriation with third countries such as Mali where human rights standards are not upheld. The reality is that the EU's financial assistance is very limited. Instead, the EU should enhance its technical assistance, especially in the security and capacity building sectors, that are often more enticing for these countries. Security Sector Reform (SSR), tariff agreements, trade incentives and training are also important. While somewhat harder in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, such approaches should be explored as a means for the EU to enhance its relationships with North African countries, whose closer vicinity to the EU make such incentives more applicable and attractive.

In concluding her argument, Balfour stressed that so long as domestic political calculations dominate the EU's internal deliberations, the Union will be unable to fashion an effective foreign policy. The EU has prioritized its security to the detriment of the most vulnerable and this trade-off between EU values and principles risks undermining Europe's future as a multicultural and liberal society. In thanking participants and the organizers, Balfour concluded by noting how NGOs and other non-policy oriented research centres need to better understand the political pressures and responsibilities that have dominated the European response to migration. While the former tend to focus on the humanitarian dimension of the crisis, emphasising Europe's deviation from its values and principles, these questions often do not have the same impact on national politicians or EU officials. There is a need to bridge these gaps and encourage a greater understanding of the priorities, responsibilities and pressures affecting each side of the argument in order to encourage a more encompassing debate capable of providing concrete solutions and recommendations for each. Facts and education are no doubt important, yet in the present context of a "post-truth world" these are unlikely to convince citizens and politicians alike, who are often more impacted by perceptions, electoral data, the media rather than hard facts and long-term solutions.

**Roderick Parkes**, from the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in Paris, took the floor as the third speaker in the session. In agreeing with Rosa Balfour that the academic, NGO and think tank discourse often seems to come from a parallel planet when compared to the viewpoints and concerns of politicians and EU officials, the speaker emphasised that the EU's approach to migration is based

<sup>9</sup> European Council, *European Council Conclusions* (EUCO 26/16), 28 June 2016, <http://europa.eu/!yw36Gm>.

<sup>10</sup> European Council, *European Council Conclusions* (EUCO 31/16), 20-21 October 2016, <http://europa.eu/!fN48By>.



on one word: “containment.” This approach is dictated by the political concerns of EU officials and leaders and will inevitably result in policy prescriptions based on the externalization of migration flows and the prevention of new arrivals, undeniably the common denominator impacting EU migration policy.

Having introduced the general thrust of his argument, Parkes, proceeded to outline the EU’s thinking on the “migration and refugee crisis,” demonstrating how containment and political realism have dominated the EU response. In this context, the speaker noted how the EU has recently embraced efforts aimed moving the EU’s borders further away from Europe’s actual physical boundaries. The EU has pushed its borders deeper into Africa, employing developmental aid and negative conditionality with these countries to extract agreement and cooperation. In examining the three major routes into Europe – the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan Routes through Turkey, Greece and the Balkans; the Central Route, through North Africa and Italy; and the Western Route, through Morocco and Spain – the speaker noted how the EU has adopted different approaches in each setting. While the Eastern Route was resolved somewhat following the conclusion of the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, the Western Route remains problematic due to the EU’s difficulties in reaching agreements with emerging economies in Western Africa. The EU’s incentives in terms of developmental aid are not working, not least in light of the fact that many of these countries actually acquire more funds through remittances from abroad compared to developmental aid and investments. In these cases, the EU’s leverage is actually quite limited and as such the policy of externalization is not working. Turning to the Central Route, EU relations with Egypt and Sudan are also quite complicated due to internal political turmoil and conflict in these countries. As a result the EU has moved further south, seeking agreements with Eritrea where Europe’s leverage is more pronounced.

Ultimately, noted the speaker, and notwithstanding the very real humanitarian concerns, buffering migration lanes away from Europe’s physical borders and into Africa is what EU officials see as working and will probably continue to pursue. Another approach, one that was also noted by previous speakers, is that of taking inspiration from other countries, such as Canada. However, even here there are a number of issues that would limit the effectiveness of these approaches if applied to Europe. Beginning from Europe’s particular internal architecture and geographic location, there are a number of factors that combine to limit the adaptability of such approaches to migration in a European context. Other options are those of pursuing more stringent repatriation agreements with third countries and the longer-term goal of conflict prevention. In the latter case, conflict prevention could help to ameliorate the root causes of migration, intervening with technical assistance and aid before the crisis actually brakes out. Parkes noted however, that we are today largely beyond this point, leaving EU countries and institutions with little other choice than to pursue externalization policies. Ultimately, there is an urgent need to enhance legal and regulated migration, as presently there exist only illegal migration means, a reality that in turn only helps human trafficking and organized crime. In concluding his argument, Parkes noted how we are clearly still living in a world dominated by Nation States. In light of this reality it is only

natural that solutions to the present crisis will emerge from the context of nation states and largely revolve around the domestic determinants of these states. The problem warned the speaker is that these approaches often take much time to develop, meaning that much suffering and “crisis” tends to occur before Europe’s bureaucratic machine is effectively put into action.

**Angelos Syrigos**, from the Department of International, European and Area Studies at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences and former Secretary General of Population and Social Cohesion at the Greek Ministry of Interior, concluded the session by giving an overview of Greek and EU migration policies. The political implications of the “migrant and refugee crisis” were analysed in detail, emphasising how European politics have changed significantly over the past decades as traditional left and right wing parties – and in particular the Christian Democrats which dominated power in many EU states – have been replaced by a growing number of anti-establishment and populist parties on both sides of the political aisle. These developments have also hampered the EU’s response to the migration challenge, as new social and political pressures have emerged in many national settings, creating disunity and enhancing domestic political constraints at the EU level.

The speaker subsequently moved to outline the different phases of the EU’s response to the migration challenge, noting how the EU’s approach changed and shifted in reaction to the worsening crisis on its frontiers. In the first instance, Syrigos noted how in 2015 the EU’s focus was set on the so-called “hotspot policy” aimed at enhancing EU assistance and support for front-line EU states – namely Greece and Italy – to better deal with the influx of migrants and refugees.<sup>11</sup> By October a second approach developed at the EU level. This centred on asking Greece to set up staging areas on the Islands to accept and register migrants arriving from the Eastern Mediterranean route. Greek authorities were asked to manage around 50,000 migrants on the Islands. Finally, in March 2016, the EU-Turkey Migration Statement was announced as a means to limit new arrivals and help Greece process and repatriate the existing migrants on the Island. Aside from the EU-Turkey deal, numerous walls and fences were built across the Balkans and Eastern Europe and these were also mentioned as important factors in driving down the number of new arrivals along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes. During this period, the EU also launched its naval mission in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia), which aimed to deter human smuggling and trafficking as well as assist national navies in search and rescue missions. Yet, these approaches did

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the EU’s “hotspot” policy see European Commission, *The Hotspot Approach to Managing Exceptional Migratory Flows*, 9 September 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2\\_hotspots\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf). For a breakdown of EU officials and representatives present in the Greek and Italian hotspots as of 19 December 2016, see European Commission, *Hotspot State of Play* (Last updated on 06 January 2017), available on the European Agenda on Migration webpage as the latest “State of Play – Hotspots”. See *European Agenda on Migration – Press material*, <http://europa.eu/!YC64jH>.

not result in an end to the crisis. Numerous EU member states (Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Austria and Norway) subsequently introduced temporary border control regimes in order to control the number of migrants entering their countries, a decision that was seen as necessary for political reasons and essentially implied a temporary suspension of Schengen Agreement. Finally, in July 2016, new regulations were approved at the EU level for the reorganization and strengthening of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. By strengthening Frontex and establishing a rapid reaction pool of 1,500 border guards, the new Agency was due to herald a more efficient EU border regime.

Syrigos emphasised how the EU-Turkey deal, followed by the closing down of the Balkan route, represented the two most successful EU responses to the crisis. While the number of new arrivals declined substantially, the humanitarian and human rights implications of these agreements should not be overlooked. The major problem today, is that Turkey can no longer be described as a “safe third country” for repatriation, meaning that almost all migrants in Greece need to be examined and registered. Processing times have consequently increased. Migrants have therefore been placed in hotspots and reception centres, which however are severely overcrowded and causing significant discomfort among the national population of the Islands, where many fear these structures will eventually become permanent. These dynamics have further increased popular backlashes against migrant. The building of new structures on the Islands is very hard and moving migrants to the Greek mainland is considered impossible due to the terms of the EU-Turkey deal, which are interpreted at the EU level as not permitting the repatriation of migrants who have left the Greek Islands. A further reason that was mentioned by the speaker as preventing the movement of migrants to the Greek mainland is the fear among certain EU states that migrants will find a way to move to other European states, thereby undermining the EU efforts to contain migration.

In concluding his argument, Syrigos emphasised that much more needs to be done at the EU level to help front-line countries tackle the migration challenge. While the national authorities in both Greece and Italy are also partly to blame, in the case of Greece, Syrigos emphasised that the EU promised to send 850 new officials to help national authorities process and register migrants and asylum seekers. Today, less than 5 percent of these have arrived, making the challenge of processing the large number of migrants a very hard task. To date about 60,000 migrants remain in Greece.<sup>12</sup> The numbers are not overwhelming but more organization is needed and many more committees should be created to help diminish waiting times and provide adequate assistance and support to migrants and asylum seekers. The situation on the Greek Islands is feeding a vicious circle of populism and racism noted the speaker. The feeling of abandonment, increasingly common among may

<sup>12</sup> As of 11 January 2017, the figure is at 62,907. The figures fluctuate daily depending on arrivals and returns. See Greek Coordination Body for the Refugee Crisis Management, *Summary Statement of Refugee Flows in Greece*, available at <http://mindigital.gr/index.php/προσφυγικό-ζήτημα-refugee-crisis>. See also UNHCR, *Greece Sites*, 3 January 2017, <https://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=2331>.

EU citizens in rural communities, is leading to more extreme views and even to the birth of vigilantes movements, developments that should serve as a significant wakeup call for national and EU authorities alike. With reference to the amount of EU funds earmarked to help the current crisis in Greece, the speaker noted only a small fraction of the 1 billion euro was actually delivered to Greek authorities, with the great majority of this money being used to fund EU agencies and operations in the country.

### Conclusion

Concluding remarks were delivered by three speakers, who briefly summarized the conference proceedings and thanked participants for a lively and informative debate. **Teresa Albano**, from the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, emphasised that beyond all the talk of a comprehensive EU migration policy the reality today is that there exist 28 – today 27 – different migration regimes, one for each member state. In this context, and in light of the heightened political atmosphere in Europe, it is particularly hard to expect politicians in national context to sacrifice elements of sovereignty for the goal of homogenizing migrant and refugee policy, not least in light of the current populist backlash and significant budgetary and fiscal constraints. Albano underlined how this is the result of an increasing fissure between the political discourse on migration and its social and economic reality. Good migration governance would be a useful tool to address demographic shifts in a progressively aging continent. However the lack of political leadership and vision in the area of migration has resulted in timid – and only partially successful – attempts to choose and select labour force, particularly among the highly skilled, while largely – and dangerously – allowed the consolidation of a two-tier labour market system, one that discriminates against migrant workers, especially if irregular and undocumented. In the short-term, such a process – better known as “social dumping” – has helped releasing the cost-pressure on the production side of EU and other destination countries of migration flows, particularly in those economic sectors that cannot externalise. However, in the long run it has fostered increasingly unfair competition between protected and unprotected categories of workers, undermining social cohesion and fuelling turf battles to the sole benefit of those aiming for the dismantlement of social welfare and workers’ protection systems. As Albano underlined, this is the real crisis underlying the contradictory political approaches towards migration. The real dilemma that complex, post-industrialized societies are addressing nowadays is the one related to the protection of vulnerable people. And, according to Albano, the process of “inferiorization” of migrants in the political discourse has allowed a progressive “normalization” of their discriminatory treatment: a real Trojan horse for the protection of social and economic rights of all individuals, migrant and native alike.

An improved EU-wide asylum and migration system is part of the overall discussion about the EU Social Agenda which indeed represents a major dilemma and priority for the future of European values and cohesion: a major challenge that the EU cannot afford to lose.

Thanos Dokos, Director-General of ELIAMEP, joined Teresa Albano in thanking the participants and delivering concluding remarks at the conference. In highlighting three important points that were raised during the discussion, Dokos emphasised that migration is a long-term challenge that is not going to end anytime soon. Indeed, what we are witnessing today may well only be the beginning of the so-called “migrant and refugee crisis.” Environmental degradation, demographic trends, identity politics and the continuation of numerous conflicts, civil wars and weak and failing states will all combine to make mass population movement a constant phenomenon. Only a united and integrated Europe will be able to respond to these challenges in an efficient manner, making the adoption of a common foreign, security and migration policy extremely urgent. Moving to address a second point, Dokos noted how many speakers made reference to Canada and Australia as two models of migration policy that could become a source of inspiration for Europe. In acknowledging that both Canada and Australia deserve positive mention on the issue of migration, Dokos cautioned that the very different institutional and geographical contexts affecting Europe, Canada and Australia must also be held in account when analysing the migration policies of these countries. In concluding his remarks, Dokos moved to note that his background in security studies makes him particularly attuned to the dangers associated with an excessive securitization of the issue of migration. When holding a hammer, everything looks like a nail, noted Dokos, who however expressed his opinion that one cannot ignore the security challenges that stem from the issue of migration. Migrants and local citizens alike commit crimes, but there is little doubt that the media have a tendency to focus more of the latter, thereby contributing to the general sense of fear and urgency across the continent. While terrorism and radicalization remain a problem, Dokos ended by emphasising that extremism is not a phenomenon limited to Muslims’ or the Middle East and North Africa but has rather become something of an international trend with many different manifestations, including in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Final concluding remarks were delivered by Lorenzo Kamel, Scientific Coordinator of the New-Med Research Network and IAI Senior Fellow, who emphasised how Europe, and the “West” more generally, holds much responsibility for the way in which the present international system is structured and the ways in which this system tends to exclude and discriminate against large numbers of people and ethnicities. Kamel emphasised that European colonialism is only part of the story and that the international financial system continues to be dominated by large corporations who take advantage of their privileged position. As confirmed by the Panama Papers,<sup>14</sup> the natural resources – fuel, gold, gas etc. – of most of the African countries and a number of the states in the Eastern Mediterranean are still today siphoned off through offshore companies that, to a large extent, are linked

<sup>13</sup> For more on the issue of radicalization see, Andrea Dessì, “Radicalisation in the Mediterranean Region: Old and New Drivers”, cit.

<sup>14</sup> International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, *The Panama Papers*, <https://panamapapers.icij.org>.

to European and American businessmen. In other words, tax havens are used to exploit the natural wealth of some of the world's poorest countries.

On top of this, resources are today sucked out of the civilian economy into the military, and here as well Western players continue to play the role of co-protagonists. The equivalent of a billion and 350 million euros in rifles, rocket launchers, heavy machine guns, mortar shells and anti-tank weapons are currently exported from Europe, particularly the Balkans, to the Middle East: a meaningful percentage of them are currently used by terrorist groups operating in Syria and Yemen.<sup>15</sup> Europe, therefore, should not simply be framed as a liberal and "generous" actor that is taking care of thousand of migrants, and there is much that can be done at the international level to help close loopholes and regulations that have allowed certain states and individuals to exploit their privileged status to the detriment of others. In concluding his argument, Kamel emphasised that about 65 percent of the total of 20 million world's refugees and displaced people are in the Middle East and that humanizing their plight and working to promote more balanced and tolerant debate about migrants will be key to countering populisms and xenophobic tendencies in Europe and beyond.

In thanking participants and welcoming the results of the debate, Kamel ended the conference by outlining the New-Med Research Network's next appointments and activities. In this respect, two important events will be held in early 2017. The first event will take place in Rome on 19 January 2017 at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), where eight outstanding young scholars from the MENA region have been invited to present a number of policy papers on salient themes tied to Euro-Med relations. Selected on the basis of their innovative research proposal, the candidates are under the age of 31 and will present papers on environmental degradation and climate change, terrorism and radicalization, the crisis of the state-system in the Middle East and the migrant and refugee crisis. A second New-Med event, scheduled for 11 April 2017 at the John Hopkins University SAIS Europe in Bologna, Italy, will address the causes and implications of the present regional (dis)order in the Middle East, examining these issues from a historical, academic and policy-oriented approach. Now in its fourth year, New-Med activities will continue with new research themes, publications, conferences and workshop opportunities scheduled in different regions and settings to help advance knowledge and build inter-personal and institutional contacts on both sides of the Mediterranean.

*Updated 16 January 2017*

<sup>15</sup> Ivan Angelovski, Miranda Patrucic and Lawrence Marzouk, "Revealed: the £1bn of Weapons Flowing from Europe to Middle East," in *The Guardian*, 27 July 2016, <https://gu.com/p/4zt2p/stw>.

## Conference Programme

Athens, 16 December 2016

### Opening Session

#### *Opening Greetings*

**Thanos Dokos**, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens

**Lorenzo Kamel**, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

#### *Introductory Remarks*

**Panos Carvounis**, European Commission Representation in Athens

**Massimo Carnelos**, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

#### *Keynote Speech*

**Hassan Hakimian**, SOAS University of London

### Session I

#### *Understanding the Migration and Refugee Crisis*

Media and policy makers have stigmatized ongoing flows of refugees and migrants as the "migration and refugee crisis". Yet, which crisis they have most on their mind often remains an elusive question. Is Europe in a crisis as a result of strained reception systems, lack of solidarity, and public concerns about integration, or should attention rather focus on the hotspots of conflict across the Mediterranean region, where the vast majority of the displaced people currently reside? And is the Syrian civil war the crisis the international community should concentrate on to tackle the phenomenon, or should the focus be much broader, addressing governance failures and developmental challenges stretching from the Middle East to sub-Saharan Africa and posing challenges for the long term? The session will elucidate the different meanings of the abused notion of "crisis" in a migration context, aiming to connect perceptions of the phenomenon to its local manifestations and symptoms to the root causes.

Chair **Dia Anagnostou**, Panteion University, Athens

Panelists **Michelle Pace**, Roskilde University (RUC), Denmark

**Efrat Ben Ze'ev**, The Ruppin Academic Center, Israel

**Angeliki Dimitriadi**, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens

### Session II

#### *Solutions to the Migration Governance Crisis*

What is presented as the refugee and migration crisis is certainly also, if not mainly, a migration governance crisis which has exposed the shortcomings of the humanitarian response, the limits of solidarity, and the inadequacy of existing refugee assistance schemes and migration management systems. Governance challenges are felt on many levels, from the local to the national, from the regional to the international, forcing a review of main available tools and resources, from border management to integration policy. The session will analyse different policy responses in the Mediterranean region and in Europe, discussing whether different perceptions and experiences of the "crises" can nonetheless coalesce around new common approaches and convergent objectives, transforming the current challenge into an opportunity to mobilize cooperation on a scale yet not seen.

Chair **Panagiotis Tsakonas**, University of the Aegean, Athens

Panelists **Emiliano Alessandri**, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Vienna

**Rosa Balfour**, The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), Brussels

**Roderick Parkes**, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Paris

**Angelos Syrigos**, Panteion University, Athens

#### Concluding Remarks

**Teresa Albano**, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Vienna

**Thanos Dokos**, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens

**Lorenzo Kamel**, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome



### Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Founded by Altiero Spinelli in 1965, does research in the fields of foreign policy, political economy and international security. A non-profit organisation, the IAI aims to further and disseminate knowledge through research studies, conferences and publications. To that end, it cooperates with other research institutes, universities and foundations in Italy and abroad and is a member of various international networks. More specifically, the main research sectors are: European institutions and policies; Italian foreign policy; trends in the global economy and internationalisation processes in Italy; the Mediterranean and the Middle East; defence economy and policy; and transatlantic relations. The IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*AffarInternazionali*), two series of research papers (*Quaderni IAI* and *IAI Research Papers*) and other papers' series related to IAI research projects.

Via Angelo Brunetti, 9 - I-00186 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 3224360

F + 39 06 3224363

[iai@iai.it](mailto:iai@iai.it)

[www.iai.it](http://www.iai.it)

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- 16 | 19 Alessandro Marrone and Vincenzo Camporini, *Recent Developments in Italy's Security and Defence Policy*
- 16 | 18e Francesca Bitondo, Alessandro Marrone and Paola Sartori, *Challenges to NATO and Italy's Role: Trump, Brexit, Collective Defence and Neighborhood Stability*
- 16 | 18 Francesca Bitondo, Alessandro Marrone e Paola Sartori, *Le sfide della Nato e il ruolo dell'Italia: Trump, Brexit, difesa collettiva e stabilizzazione del vicinato*