

Human Smuggling and Trafficking into Europe

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INTRODUCTION

Human smuggling and trafficking are two of the fastest growing transnational criminal activities, and are calculated to be among the most lucrative forms of organized crime after the drug trade.¹ While most victims are located in Asia, Western Europe post-2013 has become a major destination point for smuggled and trafficked individuals as the conditions in the countries to the South and East of Europe deteriorate. The International Organization for Migration has reported that over one million people illegally crossed European borders in 2015.² Despite great efforts to cut off migration, in September 2016 a total of 317,228 migrants and refugees had arrived in Europe by land and sea routes since the start of the year.³ Over 14,000 people have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean between January 2014 and May 2017. The number of deaths and disappearances across the Mediterranean peaked in 2016 as a consequence of the Syrian refugee crisis, when there was an increase of 40 percent over the previous year.⁴ On average, more than 3,500 people die annually trying to get to Europe.⁵

In the absence of a resolution of conflicts in the Middle East and the worsening conditions in Africa, millions who cannot move to Europe legally seek the services of smugglers and some are trafficked. The individuals who facilitate this movement make substantial profits from the thousands of people that seek to enter Europe illicitly. Europol has estimated that in 2015 alone, criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling generated between 3 and 6 billion euros.⁶ These figures are likely to show a stark increase in 2017 as there was a recorded 24 percent increase in the number of migrants entering Europe illegally.⁷ Yet this human smuggling/trafficking phenomenon is not always a standalone form of illicit trade but is connected to other forms of illegal activity as those moving individuals may also engage in other violent crimes, theft, and drug trafficking and may illegally possess weapons.⁸

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Illicit immigration has expanded but it is not a new phenomenon. The recent dramatic rise in illegal migrants is the culmination of a trend that commenced in the 1980s. Human trafficking and smuggling into Europe have grown since then as emigrants were initially attracted by generous welfare support and perceived economic advantages, as well as the demand in Western Europe for “three-D” workers – those willing to take dirty, dangerous, and/or degrading jobs that national citizens are unwilling to do. Yet the recent rise is attributable to more dramatic developments and rise of insecurity in so many regions in proximity of Europe. The conflicts and rise of terrorism in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are major drivers of migration. The impacts of climate change and absence of employment in the Sahel, enduring conflicts in the Sudan and Somalia, widespread unemployment and underemployment in Ethiopia and countries of West Africa has fueled the rise of desperate migrants eager to flee difficult conditions at home. Furthermore, the absence of governance in North Africa, particularly in Libya, has provided an important locale from which illegal migrants destined for Europe can depart.⁹ Many of those who are smuggled work as trafficked laborers to pay for their costs while in transit or on arrival. Desperate family members in the Middle East may sell a kidney to pay for the transport, so trafficking may help pay for smuggling.¹⁰

Europe is faced with an enormous governance challenge as it has been unable to stem the flows and has not been able to integrate those who have arrived. The difficult situation in which many migrants are living is not just a humanitarian crisis but one that has had significant political consequences within Europe. The illegal arrival of more than a million individuals in Europe has resulted in major backlashes against this population movement including the Brexit vote in the UK and the rise of right-wing nationalism in several countries in Continental Europe.

European policymakers have made great efforts to restrict illegal immigration. This is an enormous challenge given the nature of EU borders – the Mediterranean coast is lightly guarded, and the Balkan route that adjoins Turkey includes porous regions with high degrees of corruption¹¹ through which many migrants and trafficked people from other regions transit.¹² Ninety percent of those who are entering Europe illegally are being helped by facilitators. The illegal entry into Europe is leading to the rise of illicit networks and 40,000 people have been identified as parts of these networks from over 100 different nationalities.¹³

Payments to Turkey to deter migration to Europe¹⁴ have reduced the numbers of migrants flowing through there, but many still arrive across the Mediterranean. The recent breakdown in EU admission talks with Turkey, which came amid increasing internal instability, has made Erdogan threaten to send more migrants to Europe.¹⁵ The use of human beings as part of a political game is itself a form of human trafficking where human lives are subordinated to political interests.

Consequently, combating the transnational criminal groups that facilitate trade in humans has become a high priority for the Member States of the European Union. Policymakers have allocated significant resources to Europol, the European police

agency, which in 2016 launched The European Migrant Smuggling Center dedicated solely to supporting member states in dismantling criminal networks dedicated to these activities,¹⁶ and to Frontex, the European agency devoted to border control,¹⁷ whose budget and mandate have steadily gotten bigger since its foundation in 2004.

This chapter reviews a broad range of analysis from scholars, European agencies addressing human trafficking non-governmental agencies and multilateral bodies such as the United Nations, OSCE (the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), and the International Organization for Migration. The chapter has several goals: to outline the dynamics of smuggling/trafficking, their impact and the policies to address the phenomenon.

DEFINITIONS

Both human smuggling and trafficking involve the recruitment, movement, and delivery of migrants from a host to a destination state. What differentiates the two activities is whether the migrants are willing participants or not: traffickers enslave and exploit trafficked persons, while smuggled migrants have a consensual relationship with their smugglers and are free at the end of their journey. Human smuggling can transform into trafficking after the individuals move and are exploited. This is, unfortunately, increasing in Europe today as individuals are extorted for more money while en route from home to their destination in Europe.

The United Nations has adopted a legislative framework to define human smuggling and trafficking. Distinct protocols were adopted on the two crimes in 2000 in conjunction with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.¹⁸ The adoption of these protocols in tandem with the convention reflects the international understanding that human smuggling and trafficking are part of organized crime.¹⁹

The definition of trafficking in Article 3a of the anti-trafficking protocol defines the problem in the following way:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, or fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.²⁰

This broad definition of trafficking includes sex trafficking as well as trafficking into exploitative work situations such as domestic help, agricultural work, and work in dangerous industries. It also includes the trafficking of child soldiers, of children put up for adoption or forced into begging, and the less well-known and analyzed problem of organ trafficking. Most of these types of trafficking are

present in Europe, though there is no evidence of child soldiers since the wars in the Balkans.

The Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air defines the problem in the following way:

“Smuggling of Migrants” shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.²¹

Although human smuggling and trafficking have different definitions, the demarcation is not so clear in real life.²² Because smuggling often occurs within the context of large-scale migration, there are numerous possibilities for abuse. In the past, smuggled women and children started off as paying clients of human smugglers but ended up as trafficking victims.²³ Now, with the rising number of male illegal migrants to Europe, men have increasingly become victims of trafficking.

SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING: MODELS, TRENDS, AND ROUTES

Human smuggling and trafficking are not evenly distributed across Europe. A decade ago, according to the United Nations, five countries of Western Europe – Belgium,²⁴ Germany, Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands – had the highest recorded number of trafficking victims. A recent report published by the statistical office of the EU shows the way these trends have changed in the past years. The Netherlands and Italy remain focal areas for victims of human trafficking but Bulgaria, Romania and Latvia have been added.²⁵ These additions are countries at the eastern borders of Europe with strong domestic problems of trafficking. However, in absolute numbers, countries with the most identified victims are Italy (6,572), the United Kingdom (4,474) the Netherlands (3,926), Romania (3,243) and France (2,131).²⁶ With the exception of Romania, all of these countries have made human trafficking a priority. Therefore, these numbers may reflect the impact of enforcement rather than a greater number of victims.

A recent Europol study found that human trafficking in Europe is mainly a European issue in that around 70 percent of both, victims and facilitators are nationals of a European country (mainly central and eastern Europe).²⁷ The focus of identification in these countries is on sex trafficking, which explains the dynamics described.

Many fewer cases of labor trafficking are reported. Meanwhile, human trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation has been increasing in the past years and most of the reported victims are male citizens of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. There has been a paucity of cases addressing labor exploitation of migrants coming from the Middle East and Africa and they appear to be very under-represented in the data.²⁸

SOURCE COUNTRIES: CHANGES IN COMPOSITION

There has been very significant change in the source countries of individuals smuggled and trafficked into Europe since 2000. Before the Arab Spring, the majority of individuals were of European origin. But this has changed dramatically in the last five years as the forces of change and conflict have precipitated a flow of desperate individuals seeking the stability of Europe. Therefore, many more are arriving from conflict regions or those with low levels of economic development.

Different regions of Europe receive victims of trafficking from different source countries. In its 2012 assessment, Europol identified five major hubs of organized crime. The five hubs are: in the northwest, the Netherlands and Belgium; in the northeast, the Baltic states and Kaliningrad; in the southeast, Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece; in the south, southern Italy; and in the southwest, Spain and Portugal.²⁹ These have evolved since then. The Southern and Eastern hubs have become increasingly important with the rise of illegal migration from Africa and the Middle East and beyond. In 2016, Greece was the first point of entry for irregular migrants followed by Italy. A Northern route from Russia to Norway became increasingly important since the end of 2015.³⁰ Spain receives irregular migrants and trafficking victims from Africa and Latin America.³¹ These routes are all used because of the possibility of corrupting officials, a problem that has facilitated the growth of corruption in Europe.

Irregular immigrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan try to head to European locales such as Germany, Sweden and the UK where they may have connections and perceive the chance of success as higher. Irregular migrants from Africa originate from Senegal, Somalia, Niger, Morocco and other African countries.³² “In addition to these nationalities, there is also a continuous flow of irregular migrants from Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh, China, and Vietnam, albeit to a lesser extent.”³³ There is a significant difference in the source countries for smuggled and trafficked individuals. The major source countries of trafficking victims identified by Europol in 2015 include Albania, Brazil, China and Vietnam for the purpose of sexual exploitation and Albania, Morocco and Turkey for the purpose of forced labor. The presence of citizens of former European colonies among the victims of trafficking in Europe reveals the impact of historical legacies on contemporary exploitation. Yet it is these same former colonies that are also sources of drug flows into Europe reflecting the convergence of different forms of illicit trade – humans and narcotics.³⁴

Citizens from these former colonies are increasingly identified as victims of trafficking, both for sex and labor, particularly in the Mediterranean countries. Large numbers of women from the Dominican Republic, a Spanish colony until the early nineteenth century, are trafficked to Europe.³⁵ Women and transgender men from Brazil and Colombia are identified as victims of sex trafficking in Europe.³⁶

Italy, home to the second-largest Nigerian diaspora community in Europe, had 12,500 trafficked Nigerian women working as prostitutes in 2006, representing approximately half of the prostitutes in Italy.³⁷ In 2015, the figure was over 5,600 despite years of law enforcement and civil society efforts to counter the phenomenon.³⁸ This problem has not abated. About 3,600 Nigerian women arrived by boat into Italy in the first six months of 2016, almost double the number who were registered in the same time-period in 2015, according to the IOM. Based on past experience, IOM expects that more than 80 percent of these women will be trafficked into prostitution in Italy and across Europe.³⁹ Other forms of trafficking of illegal migrants receive less attention. For example, little effort has been made to address the labor exploitation that is going on in the agricultural sector of Italy where illegal migrants from Africa work, living in miserable circumstances. Locked up in farms in Southern Italy, the migrants are compelled to perform agricultural work with limited or no compensation.⁴⁰

Before the major rush of irregular migrants and refugees, citizens from Romania, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Hungary and Poland were those most frequently identified among European countries as sources of human trafficking. Often their movement was facilitated by citizens from their country of origin working with diaspora communities in Europe. The Netherlands, with its major focus on combating human trafficking, explains its unique representation among Western European countries.⁴¹ Prior to the mass migration of 2014–2016, the top source countries of non-EU identified victims of human trafficking included Nigeria, Brazil, China, Vietnam, and Russia.⁴²

Most of the identified trafficking victims are adults but serious problems remain in the trafficking of children. Many children are forced into begging, are compelled to engage in pickpocketing or other low level crime.⁴³ Among child victims, leading source regions are Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Asia.⁴⁴ The disappearance of 10,000 refugee children, primarily from Syria, suggests that they may have become victims of human trafficking. According to Europol, half of them have disappeared in Italy.⁴⁵

ROUTES

The routes for human smugglers and traffickers resemble those for other commodities.⁴⁶ This is true because for those who engage in this activity, humans are just another form of commodity. As Tinti and Reitano have said about smugglers in Libya, human smuggling was previously an ancillary form of smuggling but has become more central as demand and profits rise.⁴⁷ But these networks were built on smuggling networks previously based on the smuggling of fuel, cigarettes, and alcohol.⁴⁸

The smugglers are proactive and shift routes. They are flexible and exploit loopholes in the existing system. For example, when they notice that law

enforcement is weaker in one area then people are increasingly moved through that locale.

The routes that were primary in the early 2000s have changed, especially in recent years. The Arab Spring had a significant impact on illegal immigration into Western Europe. Many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who were working in North Africa when the unrest started escaped to Europe. Frontex, the European border control agency, noted that in the first nine months of 2011 there were 112,000 illegal migrants detained, compared to 77,000 for the same time-period in 2010, although not all from sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁹ As routes across the Mediterranean were shut off through interdiction at sea, more individuals came through Turkey before transiting through Greece.⁵⁰ Greece has remained a central hub for illegal migration. Open air human trafficking markets exist, like the one that can be witnessed in Athens's Victoria Square or the one in the nearby port of Piraeus, where migrants seeking asylum and human smugglers meet and arrange illegal trips to travel further west and north.⁵¹

There are many routes into Europe from different regions of the world – North Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe and Asia. The primary transit routes are across the Mediterranean, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Turkey. These routes change over time as traffickers and smugglers adapt to enforcement and effective border patrols. The accession of the Czech Republic and Poland into the European Union in 2004 reduced the use of routes across these countries, as border controls were tightened with training and support from the European Union. By contrast, the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union in 2007 has not been as successful in shutting off Balkan smuggling rings. These countries still suffer high levels of corruption at the borders and in law enforcement generally. These countries were key in the smuggling of migrants from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan until barriers were established in other East European countries such as Hungary.⁵² Many of the routes used for human smuggling have been used to smuggle goods since the time of the Ottoman empire.⁵³

The individuals trafficked into Europe travel by air, sea, and land (most often by cars, buses, and trucks). In terms of sea travel, an important increase in the use of unseaworthy vessels and decommissioned fishing and leisure boats has become evident in recent years, as well as facilitation by train and by air, which is presumed to be related to the additional controls introduced on land and sea routes.⁵⁴

An important identified route before it was cracked down on went from Macedonia, through Serbia and Hungary, and into Austria.⁵⁵ Entry from the Baltic Sea and through the northern parts of Europe is less common. Many routes – whether from Africa, China, or Afghanistan and Pakistan – are circuitous and involve long distances. The routes from Latin America are more direct; those smuggled and trafficked often fly straight to Spain or Portugal.

For migrants from Nigeria, there are many routes from the exit point of Lagos into Europe.⁵⁶ These routes change and reorganize on a constant basis to avoid

intervention by the police or immigration patrol guards. Migrants from Nigeria use routes similar to those from other countries in the Sahel. A major route within Africa goes from Ethiopia and Sudan into Egypt and Libya.⁵⁷ During the civil conflict in Libya, new routes were used as smugglers and traffickers exploited the internal chaos in Libya to move individuals from sub-Saharan Africa to Italy's island of Lampedusa.⁵⁸ This movement out of Libya continues as this has become the central launching point for immigrants out of Africa. This exit towards Italy from Libya accelerated in 2015, placing a strain on Europe's capacity to deal with the flow.⁵⁹ Members of the Italian Coast Guard have rescued individuals from flimsy boats.⁶⁰

Before 2014, illicit migrants did not enter Europe often by sea; only 8 percent were thought to have entered this way.⁶¹ The recent migrant crisis resulting from conflicts in the Middle East, Afghanistan and continuous unrest in Africa changed this trend and in 2015, according to IOM, only 3 percent of migrants reached Europe by land; most of the rest have initially entered by sea.⁶² This analysis has been questioned, suggesting that current migration patterns are based on ingenuity and combine a variety of "permutations" of transport.⁶³ Apart from those who enter illegally, a significant number enter legally by air, then stay on beyond their visa authorization.⁶⁴

Frontex, the European border control agency, has identified in recent years the increasing use of large cargo ships to transport migrants directly from the Turkish coast near Syria to Italy.⁶⁵ The European police body has identified more than 230 locations where illegal facilitation or migrant smuggling takes place; the main criminal hotspots for migrant smuggling outside the EU are Amman, Algiers, Beirut, Benghazi, Cairo, Casablanca, Istanbul, Izmir, Misrata, Oran, and Tripoli. The main criminal hotspots for intra-EU movements include Athens, Berlin, Budapest, Calais, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Hoek van Holland, London, Madrid, Milan, Munich, Paris, Passau, Rome, Stockholm, Tornio, Thessaloniki, Vienna, Warsaw, and Zeebrugge.⁶⁶ These are not isolated locales, as there are interactions among them. For example, recruiters in Turkey bring individuals to Libya who will be moved to Europe. Individuals in refugee camps sell their kidneys for transplants in Egypt to have family members provided smuggling transport to Europe.⁶⁷

PROFILES OF FACILITATORS

Traffickers are logistics specialists who can move individuals across vast distances. More than 90 percent of the migrants travelling to the EU used facilitation services. In most cases, these services were offered and provided by criminal groups. A large number of criminal networks as well as individual criminal entrepreneurs now generate substantial profits from migrant smuggling.⁶⁸ They often require numerous safe houses along the way where they can lodge their human cargo until it is safe to move them further. For individuals traveling the Balkan route into Western Europe, these safe houses are often in Turkey and Eastern Europe. For those traveling from sub-Saharan Africa, there are many stations along the way.

Routes are often indirect, as traffickers carefully avoid policed roads, border checkpoints, and jurisdictions where there is efficient and honest law enforcement. While not quite as complex as the operations of large-scale narcotics traffickers, human traffickers and smugglers do require a military-like intelligence capacity to successfully avoid these obstacles. The end destinations for victims are often diaspora communities that can absorb the trafficked people, or urban areas where allied crime groups can receive and distribute the trafficked laborers.⁶⁹

A general profile of traffickers and smugglers is hard to assemble but there are some common patterns shared by facilitators. About 70 percent of European citizens suspected to be involved in human trafficking are citizens of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Non-European networks often have participants of Chinese or Nigerian origin. The Chinese are known to be proficient in the production of fake documents and the Nigerians in the black market of stolen identifications.⁷⁰

In contrast, human smuggling is a more international business. Europol has identified participants in this business from over one hundred countries. The most common countries of origin include some of the Eastern European countries associated with human trafficking but others as well such as Kosovo and Serbia that have been part of smuggling routes. It also includes participants in many more countries, from North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia), the Middle East (Turkey and Syria), and Pakistan. In contrast with trafficking, many more of the smuggling networks involve non-Europeans, with 44 percent of the networks composed of non-EU nationals and 26 percent of both Europeans and non-EU citizens. Less than a third are composed only of Europeans. This reveals the transnational nature of this phenomenon.⁷¹ Research has revealed cases of collaboration among these groups, suggesting an existing, or at least nascent, transnational enterprise of broad reach.⁷² Such criminal groups – especially the Chinese, Nigerian, and Romanian ones – work with diaspora communities overseas to limit detection. Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Turkish groups are often facilitators, moving individuals from the east through the Balkans to Western Europe, following trajectories already established in the Ottoman era. Balkan traffickers operate within family groups, often functioning within diaspora communities.⁷³

Some activities are outsourced to groups that have a special skill set or a regional expertise. This is possible because for already a decade, pyramidal structures have been replaced by loose network structures.⁷⁴ The phenomenon of outsourcing has increased as the complexity of smuggling and the scale of the business has accelerated in recent years. For example, residents in a border area may take “advantage of the opportunity to profit from the presence of irregular migrants by assisting them to cross an individual border or a difficult stretch of terrain.”⁷⁵

The businesses of smuggling and trafficking regularly intersect with the legitimate world as facilitators are needed from legal businesses such as personnel of hotels, travel agencies, and groups that can process money. Employment agencies, which may be complicit, are used to facilitate the

movement of victims. Apartment owners may knowingly or unknowingly rent apartments to smuggled and trafficked individuals, thus facilitating their residence in Western Europe. Nightclub owners may employ young unauthorized female workers, and some even go to great lengths to secure such employees. Hotels seeking cheap staff may hire unauthorized workers who have been smuggled or trafficked into Europe.⁷⁶ All these actors may be only tangentially involved, and sometimes may be without realizing it, but nevertheless their support is essential to the execution of the crime. Groups also hire individuals outside their communities to reduce suspicion. Belgian and Dutch women have been hired by Balkan clans engaged in trafficking to help run day-to-day operations and minimize risks.⁷⁷

Corrupt officials include members of the military, border control agencies, consular officials, law enforcement officials and regulatory agencies. Specialized service providers include those with proficiency in new media for communications and advertising, producers of illicit documents and specialists in logistics.

Women are more active in human trafficking than other areas of transnational crime.⁷⁸ This pertains to the business of trafficking opposed to that of smuggling, where men still predominate. Analysing the business in Southern and Eastern Europe,⁷⁹ research found an important number of women “recruiters” who were encouraged by their traffickers “to invite their friends to work abroad also but were unaware of the intention to exploit.” A similar situation was identified in Nigerian trafficking networks, where women tend to be in charge of controlling female victims. But in some trafficking networks women enjoy less autonomy.⁸⁰ Nigerian madams are often key people in the trafficking networks. They are often former victims of sexual exploitation themselves who recruit young women in their home towns and finance their transport to European territory. Their victims will work for them until they repay the investment.⁸¹ This dynamic has come to establish an observable cycle of victims turning into offenders.⁸²

FACILITATING TECHNOLOGIES

Contemporary human smuggling and trafficking is facilitated not only by people but by technology. The following technologies have been identified in Europe through investigations of recruitment techniques of actual trafficking victims: chat rooms; SMS messaging; camera phones; mail interception software; video link; the dark web; social networking sites; computer games; and peer-to-peer networks.⁸³ New technologies are also contributing to the operations of human smugglers moving people into Europe. One broker for a journey in which 500 people died at sea after departing from Egypt advertised his services through Facebook. An analysis of the facilitator’s Facebook page shows the connections of the recruiter to some of his victims who perished at sea.⁸⁴ The role of all these technologies has become central to understanding new trends of trafficking and smuggling in human beings, as became evident after the expansion in social media accounts devoted to such activities, which

went from 141 in 2015, to 1,150 in 2016, a more than eightfold increase in just one year.⁸⁵

KEY NETWORKS

There are now many diverse networks involved in the smuggling and trafficking of people. In 2013–2014, Europol received reports on 6,000 organized groups involved in human trafficking. The vast majority – 90 percent – were involved in sexual exploitation, 5.6 percent concerned cases of labour exploitation, 1.9 percent were involved in forced sham marriages, and 0.3 percent in forced criminality and begging. These data may be more representative of citizen concerns than the actual distribution of victims.⁸⁶

Especially important are the groups moving people from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Turkish criminal groups have become specialists in the logistics needed to move drugs and people. Groups in the eastern parts of Turkey, especially on the borders with Iraq and Syria, have helped facilitate this illicit trade.⁸⁷ In some cases, the crime groups are linked with the terrorist organization the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).⁸⁸ ISIS and al Nusra generate funds by individuals seeking to be smuggled out of the conflict region. The Turkish National Police revealed that many transnational criminals from different countries operated in Turkey, facilitating this trade. Already in 2008, criminals from 64 different countries operating in conjunction with different Turkish crime groups were arrested in Turkey.⁸⁹ Many of these were functioning in the drug arena, but their networks were also utilized for trade in human beings.

Turkish human smuggling follows the trade routes of the Ottoman empire. Instead of bringing spices and silks from the Orient to Western Europe, these routes bring political refugees from conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Somalia and labor migrants who seek to earn more in the economies of Europe. Turkish organized crime has globalized in recent decades, facilitating this trade from East to West.⁹⁰ The geographic location of Turkey on the Black Sea and its borders with Soviet successor states, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, all facilitate this trade. Moreover, its long Mediterranean border – too long to be fully policed – provides excellent points of covert entry and exit from the country.

The recent rise of smuggling/trafficking from North Africa has led to a rise of new actors. But these groups are not as well known as the Turkic and Balkan groups, which have been operational for longer. A proclaimed successful extradition of a major smuggler from North Africa has been challenged in the Italian courts because of problems of identification.⁹¹

THE ROLE OF CORRUPTION

Corruption is deeply connected to the problem of human trafficking in Europe: travel agencies, border guards, law enforcement, military, customs officials, consular officers, and other diplomatic personnel must be bribed or extorted

for trafficking to be successful.⁹² Corruption in Greece by border officials has helped facilitate the migrant flows into Europe. Migrants arriving from Turkey could pass after bribes were paid as officers simply “failed to notice that the passports being used belonged to somebody else.”⁹³

In other cases, corruption prevents exploited victims from receiving the protection of law enforcement authorities. Victims’ narratives often point to the complicitous relationship between criminals and law enforcement authorities as one of the main reasons that prevent them from denouncing their victimizers earlier.⁹⁴ The vicious role of public officials has been detected at all of the stages of human trafficking, “indicating that bribery and abuse of power of public officials or influential people are often part of the process.”⁹⁵

Corrupt officials facilitate human trafficking and/or smuggling by providing operational information, which allows criminal networks to avoid detection. Eleven of the 23 member states of Frontex reported to have identified this type of corruption, and two more reported awareness of this problem in their country.⁹⁶

PROFILE OF TRAFFICKED AND SMUGGLED PERSONS

A very different profile differentiates the individuals who are trafficked and those who are smuggled. The individuals who are smuggled and then become victims of trafficking come from different regions of the world and are more often male. In fact, in West and Central Europe more nationalities have been represented among human trafficking victims than in any other part of the world.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Europe identifies more adult victims than youthful ones. Globally, children account for about one-third of victims but in Europe the figure is closer to one-fifth.⁹⁸ Many of the identified child victims of human trafficking are Roma from Eastern Europe.⁹⁹ This may be a consequence of the fact that there is little local trafficking and most individuals have to travel far to reach their point of exploitation. The profiles of victims of trafficking in Europe identified a decade ago reveals an enormous range of victims: young children who are forced to sell flowers in the street, beg, or commit petty crime for their traffickers; mature women who are exploited as care providers for children and the elderly; and men forced to undertake manual labor.¹⁰⁰ Women and children are most often identified as the victims and they are exploited for sex and are victims of domestic servitude. This phenomenon is even broader as homosexual males were trafficked from Latin America primarily to serve male clients; however, this problem has largely been neglected in UN reports, as they rely on reported data.¹⁰¹ A 2015 Eurostat report found that only 4 percent of the victims of sexual exploitation were male but men predominated in those identified as victims of labor trafficking (71 percent).¹⁰² Yet there is significant research and analysis to suggest that male trafficking, particularly in the sexual arena, is under-reported.¹⁰³

The irregular migrant population and those seeking refugee status come from very different countries than those who are trafficked. The motivations to enter

are clear. Not only are individuals hoping to enter a safer environment, but one that allows them to send remittances home. Research suggests that undocumented immigrants typically send more remittances than legal immigrants.¹⁰⁴

The diverse origins of the migrants are illustrated by a ship that left Egypt with a tragic outcome when most passengers died in transit across the Mediterranean on April 9, 2016. Among the victims were 190 people from Somalia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan, Syria and other countries. Other irregular migrants come from Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.¹⁰⁵ Most of these attempting to make the voyage are male. According to figures released by the UNHCR and local authorities from Greece, Italy, Spain, and Malta in the first ten months of 2015, “more than one in five of over 870,000 refugees and migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Europe is a child.”¹⁰⁶ Almost half the children seeking asylum in Europe come from three war-torn countries – Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.¹⁰⁷ Many of these children are vulnerable to exploitation.

There are significant numbers of unaccompanied minors coming from Afghanistan and this problem has been identified since the mid-2000s. The problem has accelerated since the withdrawal of NATO forces in 2014. Families are paying between 5,000 to 8,500 euros to have the children transported.¹⁰⁸ This treacherous journey across many countries requires numerous facilitators. But the children are not assured entry to their destination countries. Before the abolition of the Calais camp in France, there were over 1,000 children among 10,000 adults – most from Afghanistan. Only a small number of them were certified to be fast-tracked as refugees under family unification laws.¹⁰⁹

CONCLUSION

The mass numbers of people arriving in Europe who are vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers, smugglers, and facilitators is very significant. Many embark on the voyage to Europe, believing that they are leaving for a better situation. But the reality which awaits them is far different and there is a limited capacity within Europe to process and absorb refugees. While some Europeans are ready to help smuggle migrants to safety,¹¹⁰ there is a mounting resistance in many countries to Europe to settling these individuals.¹¹¹ Therefore, for many who were not initially victims of trafficking, their inability to become legal residents of Europe forces them into a situation of illegality. This compounds the risk and the reality of human trafficking.

The human tragedy of these desperate individuals is just one element of the problem. There are broader consequences for Europe from human smuggling and trafficking that include reduced quality of governance as a result of Europe’s inability to police its borders, violence against individual victims, and increased anti-immigrant sentiment that is having major political

consequences on Continental Europe and contributed to the Brexit vote in the UK and the anti-referendum vote in Italy. The economic costs of providing the needs for impoverished migrants and the diversification of organized crime into the business of human smuggling and trafficking has dramatically increased profits, further embedding crime into the economic life of European countries and exacerbating problems of corruption.

Not only do the practices of smugglers and traffickers violate basic human rights, but, once arrived, the unauthorized status of the transported irregular migrants challenges democratic processes. The significant numbers of unauthorized immigrants, including trafficked people now living and working in Europe do not enjoy the rights of citizenship or legal residency. Refugee status is hard to obtain even for those deserving of this status. Few countries in Europe, apart from Germany and Sweden, are willing to regularize their status or provide residence permits, since this could be seen as rewarding illegal behavior.¹¹² Legislation¹¹³ has made victims of trafficking a vulnerable group in the European Union entitled to special asylum seeking procedures. But determining the extent of coercion, deception, and exploitation that qualify an individual for this status is not well defined.¹¹⁴

At present there are no long-term strategies to control irregular migrant flows other than greater and often authoritarian controls of Europe's borders. The problem of irregular migration and the illicit and corrupt actors that facilitate this activity are no longer just crime problems for Europe. They are concerns that go to the core of European politics, identity, and the future economy of the region. The abuse that is associated with the smuggling and trafficking results in widespread human suffering and victimization and has made the criminal law and justice system and asylum processes increasing arbiters of the conditions of human existence. But these overburdened systems are ill-adapted to dealing with major inflows that have broader consequences for the future of Europe.

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