Terrorism Experts Conference & DAT Executive Level Seminar Report

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Centre of Excellence Defense Against Terrorism

COE-DAT

TERRORISM EXPERTS CONFERENCE & DAT EXECUTIVE LEVEL SEMINAR REPORT

16-17 OCTOBER 2024

ANKARA, TÜRKİYE

TERRORISM EXPERTS CONFERENCE REPORT

Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism
(COE-DAT)

16-17 OCTOBER 2024

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CONTENT

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Prof. Birgül DEMİRTAŞ, TED University, Türkiye.

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF, Loughborough University, UK.

Dr. Aleksander OLECH, Head of International Cooperation at Defence24, Poland.

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Biographies

Mr. Gabriele CASCONE—Keynote Speaker

Head of Counter-Terrorism Section, Operations Division, NATO HQ, Brussels.

Mr. Gabriele CASCONE spent the first part of his career as an officer in the Carabinieri Corps. This included two tours of duty in Bosnia and Herzegovina with IFOR/SFOR in 1996 and 1997. In 1998, he joined the NATO International Staff, where he still works, having served in three divisions (NATO Office of Security, Political Affairs and Emerging Security Challenges).

The focus of his twenty-year career at NATO, has been mostly on the Western Balkans and the Middle East and North Africa. Since July 2019 he is has been serving as the Head of the Counter-Terrorism Section.

Mr. CASCONE holds a B.A. in Law from the University of Parma (Italy) and a M.A. in International Relations from the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium).

Prof. Giray SADIK—Academic Advisor

Professor, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Türkiye

Prof. Giray SADIK is Chair in the Department of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science and Director of European Studies Research Center, both at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Türkiye. Previously, he was Eisenhower Fellow at NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy, and Swedish Institute Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Global Political Studies at Malmö University, Sweden. Prof. SADIK received his PhD in Political Science from the University of Georgia, USA, specializing in International Relations and Comparative Politics. His current research focuses on international security, Transatlantic relations, hybrid threats, counter-terrorism, European security and foreign policy, border and maritime security. Prof. SADIK is a member of the Expert Pool of the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, Helsinki, Finland. Prof. SADIK was guest lecturer and invited speaker on international security issues at various international forums including Carleton University (Canada), Baltic Defense College (Estonia), NATO School Oberammergau (Germany), London School of Economics and Political Science (UK), European Policy Center (Belgium), Rondeli Security Conference (Georgia), Ludovika University of Public Service (Hungary).

Dr. Heather GREGG

Professor, George C. Marshall Center, Germany

Heather S. GREGG is Professor of Irregular Warfare at the George C. Marshall Center European Center for Security Studies, Garmisch, Germany. She is also a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Dr. GREGG's academic focus is on irregular warfare, terrorism and counterterrorism, causes of extremism, and leveraging culture in population centric conflicts, including resiliency and repairing communities and national unity in the wake of war and political instability.

Prior to joining the Marshall Center, Dr. GREGG was a professor at the U.S. Army War College, and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where she worked primarily with Special Operations Forces. She is the 2017 recipient of the NPS school-wide Hamming Award for excellence in teaching. Dr. GREGG was also an associate political scientist at the RAND Corporation from 2003-2006. She has conducted research for USASOC, OSD, TRADOC, NCTC, JIEDDO, and Department of State.

Dr. GREGG earned her PhD in Political Science in 2003 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She also holds a Master's degree from Harvard Divinity School, where she studied Islam, and a Bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology, with honors, from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

In addition to academic experience, Dr. GREGG has spent time in several regions of conflict, including Palestine/West Bank and the former Yugoslavia, in addition to working in Qatar and Japan, and studying in Hungary. From 2013-2015, she was part of teaching and engagement teams in Tajikistan.

In 2016, she taught at the Indonesian Defense University on subjects relating to asymmetric warfare. Most recently, she has participated in a series of engagements with NATO's Center of Excellence, Defense Against Terrorism in Ankara, Türkiye.

Dr. GREGG has published extensively on irregular warfare, religiously motivated conflict and extremism including: Religious Terrorism (Cambridge University Press, 2020); "Religiously Motivated Violence" (Oxford University Press 2016); Building the Nation: Missed Opportunities in Iraq and Afghanistan (University of Nebraska 2018); The Path to Salvation: Religious Violence from the Crusades to Jihad (University of Nebraska 2014); and co-editor of The Three Circles of War: Understanding the Dynamics of Modern War in Iraq (Potomac, 2010).

Assoc. Prof. Efe TOKDEMİR

Associate Professor, Bilkent University, Ankara, Türkiye

Dr. Efe TOKDEMİR is an Associate Professor of International Relations at Bilkent University, and currently serves as a Visiting Scholar at Chicago Project on Security and Threats in The University of Chicago. He took his bachelor's degree from the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Boğaziçi University in 2012, received his MA (2015) and PhD (2017) in Political Science from Binghamton University. Dr. TOKDEMİR was previously a postdoctoral fellow of ISA James N. Rosenau Fellowship (2017-2018), and a visiting scholar at The Ohio State University's Mershon Center for International Security Studies (2016-2018).

His research and teaching interests include conflict processes, specifically non-violent strategies in civil war, foreign policy and public opinion, political use of force, and quantitative methods. Dr. TOKDEMİR's book "Battle for Allegiance Governments, Terrorist Groups, and Constituencies in Conflict" has been published by University of Michigan Press in 2020, and examines non-violent tactics employed by state and non-state armed groups during conflict.

TOKDEMİR received "Young Scientist Award (BAGEP)" from Science Academy (Bilim Akademisi) in 2019, "Award for Outstanding Young Scientist" (GEBIP) from Turkish Academy of Sciences (TUBA) in 2020, Sakıp Sabancı International Research Award in 2021, TÜBİTAK Incentive Award in 2023, and International Relations Council of Türkiye Young Scholars Award in 2024. Dr. TOKDEMİR'S project on non-violent counterinsurgency strategies has been recently funded by TÜBİTAK National Young Leader Researchers Program for 2022-2025. His works have so far appeared in leading journal of the field such as Journal of Conflict Resolution, *Journal of Peace Research, Political Behavior, Conflict Manag*

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES

Adjunct Professor, Universidad Externado, Colombia

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES is an adjunct professor at Universidad Externado in Bogotá. He researches conflict in Colombia and organized crime more generally in Latin America. He adopts an ethnographic and interdisciplinary approach to understand violence and conflict within high-risk contexts of rebel and criminal governance. His particular interest is the recruitment of children, teenagers and young adults by non-state armed groups and the varying forms of youth participation in conflict and organized crime. His research is based mainly on creative, participative and narrative-based methodologies, which seek to promote peacebuilding and personal/social transformation. He is the founder of Mi Historia, or My Story, a foundation that works to prevent recruitment as well as the reintegration of former child combatants and justice-involved youth. He is currently an adviser to UNICEF Colombia and the Colombian presidency. He is also a visiting fellow in the Faculty of International, Political and Urban Studies at Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá and the Department of Criminology and Sociology at Bournemouth University in the UK.

Ms. Zeynep BOZ

Head of Combatting Illicit Trafficking Department, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Türkiye.

Zeynep BOZ officiates as the Head of Department of Combatting Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Türkiye. After graduating from the Department of Prehistory at Ankara University, she started her professional career in 2007 as an associate expert in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. She gained her expert title upon defending her expertise thesis on the UNIDROIT 1995 Convention and Bilateral Agreements in 2010. She was invited to join the UNESCO 1970 Convention Secretariat in 2014. In 2015, she was appointed as the focal point of UNESCO to the UN Security Council for the implementation of the paragraphs 15-17 of the UNSC Resolution 2199. She returned to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Türkiye in early 2017. Her responsibilities include the implementation of the UNESCO 1970 Convention, organizing training and awareness-raising programmes, contributing to the planning of Türkiye's policies on preventing illicit trafficking at the international and national level as well as dealing with restitution cases. She holds the three Ministerial awards and several certificates of achievement related to the fight against illicit trafficking as well as a diploma of Art, Law and Ethics (Institute of Art and Law, London, UK).

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF

Teacher in International Relations, Politics and History, Loughborough University, UK.

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF has broad experience of International Relations and security issues, both as a practitioner and as an academic. This includes service as a senior officer in the UK Armed Forces in operations ranging from famine relief in Africa to stabilization operations in the South Atlantic, deterrence support in the Cold War and strategic aspects of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has worked in support of diplomacy in the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and in information fusion, analysis and communication in some of UK's security-related government departments. He has been Head of Training Management for the Royal Air Force where he had responsibility for physical fitness, combat survival and through life learning. He managed a private security consultancy specializing in areas such as cybersecurity and countering violent extremism. Additionally, he served as a Consultant Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, the UK's oldest think tank.

Prof. Birgül DEMİRTAŞ

Professor, TED University, İstanbul, Türkiye.

Birgül DEMIRTAŞ is professor of International Relations and currently a visiting scholar at the University of Cologne (between June 20-September 17). She has received her BA in Political Science and International Relations from Boğaziçi University, İstanbul in 1995; MA in International Relations from Bilkent University, Ankara in 1999; PhD in Political Science from Freie Universität Berlin, in 2005. She has previously worked at Başkent University, TOBB University of Economics and Technology and Turkish-German University. Her studies concentrate on Turkish foreign policy, German foreign policy, Balkans politics, city diplomacy and gender. She was the assistant editor of the academic peer-review Journal of Uluslararası İlişkiler (International Relations, indexed in SSCI) between 2004-2018 and was its managing editor between 2019-2021. In addition, she was the editor of the journal of Perceptions between 2014-2018.

She has articles published in Turkish Studies, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, Middle East Policy, Iran and the Caucasus, Internationale Politik, Femina Politica, WeltTrends and Perceptions.

Dr. Aleksander OLECH

Head of International Cooperation at Defence24, Poland.

Dr. Aleksander OLECH is the Head of International Cooperation at Defence 24, where he leads strategic initiatives and fosters crucial global partnerships. He is a distinguished lecturer at both national and international universities, sharing his deep expertise in international relations and security studies. As a NATO associate, analyst, and publicist, Dr. OLECH contributes significantly to discussions and policy development in global defence and diplomacy. His previous role as Deputy Director of the Department of Africa and the Middle East at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allowed him to shape regional policies and influence international relations. Over recent years, Dr. OLECH has worked extensively with various NATO Centers of Excellence, including NATO ENSEC COE in Vilnius, NATO StratCom in Riga, NATO CCD COE in Tallinn, and NATO COE DAT in Ankara, focusing on enhancing security measures, strategic communications, terrorism and defence technologies. He holds degrees from the European Academy of Diplomacy and the War Studies University, where he specialized in French-Russian relations, security challenges in Africa, and NATO's security policy. Dr. OLECH's research and professional contributions continue to impact global security dynamics and diplomatic strategies, positioning him as a leading young voice in these critical areas.

Assoc. Prof. Sıtkı EGELİ

Associate Professor, İzmir University of Economics, Türkiye.

Associate Professor Sıtkı EGELİ is a military and security studies researcher and analyst teaching at İzmir University of Economics. Between 1991 and 1999, he served in Türkiye's under secretariat for Defense Industries as Director for Foreign Relations, responsible among other things of arms and export controls. 2000 through 2015, he was hired as a senior executive by an international consulting firm specializing in defense and aerospace industries. He holds degrees from the Boğaziçi University (BA), the University of Chicago (MA), and Bilkent University (PhD). He has several books and articles and took part in task forces on proliferation of WMD and their delivery means, air and missile defense, weaponization of space, emerging and disruptive technologies, arms and export controls, air power, and the impact of arms buildup and technologies on regional security issues and challenges.

Mr. Chris BECKMAN

Principal Security Engineer, Taxbit, USA.

Mr. Chris BECKMAN works in the private sector as a principal security engineer at Taxbit, a tax and accounting compliance technology company. He has been working in security-related engineering roles for the last ten years, including at startups focused on AI and block chain. He specializes in application and cloud infrastructure security, vulnerability analysis, threat detection, and risk management. He also conducts ongoing research into machine learning vulnerabilities, including prompt injection attacks. As part of his role, Chris has developed and conducted hands-on learning programs to help engineers strengthen their knowledge of secure coding. He leads red team activities, internal penetration testing, and automation of security controls. His work combines the technical and policy focus areas of cybersecurity. Chris holds a Juris Doctor law degree from the University of Iowa College of Law, with a focus on cybersecurity, privacy, and software legal protection.

Mr. Ahmet KAYGUSUZ

Head of Corporate Communication Department, Secretariat of Defence Industry, Türkiye.

Mr. Ahmet KAYGUSUZ works in Secretariat of Defence Industries as a head of corporate communication department; and he served for a long period in different roles as senior associate between 2007-2014, central Asia and far east director between 2014-2024 and He is currently member of boards at STM defence, VATANJET aviation Inc., KAZAKHSTAN ASELSAN ENGINEERING. Before Secretariat of Defence Industries worked as Senior European Union Associate in General Directorate of Civil Aviation Department of the Ministry of Transport Infrastructure between 2005-2007 and as Senior European Union Associate at Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure between 2004-2005.

Dr. Colin P. CLARKE

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Dr. Colin P. CLARKE is the Director of Research at The Soufan Group, an intelligence and security consulting firm based in New York City. He is also an Associate Fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) - The Hague. CLARKE holds a PhD in international security policy from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. He is the author of several books on terrorism, including "After the Caliphate: The Islamic State and the Future Terrorist Diaspora."

Prof. Gabor NYARY

Professor, Milton Friedman University, Hungary.

Trained in History, he taught world system theories at the ELTE University of Budapest. Later, he joined an international consulting firm as a business development director, managing the European Union's major communication projects for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hungary. Since 2018, he has been professor of Digital Diplomacy and Geopolitics at the Milton Friedman University in Budapest. A research fellow at the Hungarian Public Service University, he investigates the issues of cyberspace geopolitics. He is the subject area leader and professor for cyberspace national security issues at the prestigious Hungarian Diplomatic Academy. His present research focus is emerging technologies, AI-assisted social simulations in IR and terrorism.

Prof. Yavuz ERCİL

Professor, Başkent University, Ankara, Türkiye.

He graduated from the Turkish Military Academy in 1991 with a Management and Organization bachelor's degree. He completed his master's degree in Organization program at İstanbul University Social Sciences Institute in 1992. In 2001 he received a PhD degree from Gazi University Social Sciences Institute, Department of Administration. He deserved the title of associate professor in the field of Strategy and Management in 2010. He has taught a variety of strategy and management courses. In addition to numerous publications in national and international peer-to-peer journals, he has published national and international books and book chapters. He is especially quite familiar with system dynamics and multivariate statistical analysis methods. He is currently working at the Faculty of Communication, Başkent University as a professor. His research interests focus on strategy, simulation, systems dynamics, and network analysis.

TERRORISM EXPERTS CONFERENCE 2024

The Terrorism Experts Conference 2024, organized by the Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) in Ankara, Türkiye, convened experts, policymakers, and practitioners to explore the dynamic and multifaceted challenges of counterterrorism. Held on October 16-17, the conference featured a series of distinguished presentations and discussions that illuminated critical aspects of the evolving global security landscape.

The central theme revolved around terrorism's persistence on the global stage, characterized by its capacity for adaptation and resurgence. Despite the contemporary emphasis on great power competition, terrorism remains a significant and enduring threat, underscoring the importance of understanding its nature to develop effective countermeasures. Panelists emphasized the need to build capacities that address both immediate and long-term threats, integrating lessons learned into future strategies. Additionally, realistic outlook and humility are depicted as essential features of the NATO's strategy in counterterrorism. Indeed, NATO's breathing space is limited and cannot act in an all-encompassing manner. Therefore, the threat-centric approach reveals itself as central for identifying the threat initially and subsequently react while providing a body of common knowledge.

Key discussions during the conference centered on the interplay between kinetic and non-kinetic tools in counter-terrorism operations, the necessity of tailoring policies to specific contexts, and the importance of addressing the underlying conditions that fuel terrorism. The empirical evidence presented by the panelists highlighted the ineffectiveness of one-size-fits-all approaches and stressed the urgent need for strategies that bridge macro-level policies with micro-level realities.

In addition to operational and policy considerations, the human security dimension of counterterrorism emerged as a vital concern. Discussions underscored the exploitation of vulnerable populations, particularly children and young girls, by terrorist groups, highlighting the necessity of gender-sensitive approaches. Moreover, the targeting of cultural heritage by terrorist actors emphasized the need for intersectoral cooperation and civilian-led initiatives in counter-terrorism efforts.

Regional dynamics were another significant aspect of the agenda. Challenges in the Balkans, shaped by ongoing democratization processes, and the instability in the Sahel region were discussed as areas requiring focused international cooperation. Participants highlighted that achieving lasting peace and security in these regions demands addressing structural issues at their root.

The conference also brought attention to the dual-edged role of technology in counterterrorism. While advancements such as unmanned sea vehicles and artificial intelligence offer new tools for state actors, they also present novel threats when exploited by non-state groups. The need for comprehensive strategies to counter cyber-attacks and safeguard critical infrastructure was a recurring theme.

In another session, Türkiye's advancements in the defense industry were presented as a testament to its growing competencies in the fight against terrorism. COE-DAT's ongoing efforts, including projects on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the intersection of AI and terrorism, and academic simulations, exemplify its commitment to enhancing global counter-terrorism knowledge and capabilities.

This report provides an overview of the key themes of the conference by focusing on the general topics of the panels and the presentations delivered by the panelists. It offers a comprehensive summary of the discussions and insights shared during the event, reflecting the core issues addressed throughout sessions.

Opening Remarks

Generals, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished participants and lecturers,

I am pleased to introduce myself, Colonel Halil Sıddık AYHAN, Director of the Center of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism.

It is an honor and a great pleasure to welcome such a distinguished audience to our annual flagship events, conducted in a unified manner this year, the Combined Terrorism Experts Conference and Defence Against Terrorism Seminar.

I am delighted by the significant interest this initiative has garnered. We have attracted over 156 participants from 31 countries spanning 5 continents, including representatives from academia, regional organizations, national war colleges, combatant commands, partner nations, and NATO headquarters. This represents a remarkable assembly of knowledge and expertise.

For those who are not familiar with our Centre of Excellence, allow me first to provide you a brief introduction of the center.

In 2005, COE-DAT was inaugurated as an internationally recognised and respected resource for expertise in the field of defence against terrorism for NATO, becoming the second Centre of Excellence established among the 30 that have since been established.

At the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington the Heads of State and Government endorsed the Alliance's updated Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism. With that in mind, COE-DAT strives to be at the forefront of Counter-Terrorism analysis and to serve as the hub of a wide network – a community of interest – on Counter-Terrorism expertise for NATO. Simply put, our aim is to provide key decision-makers a comprehensive understanding of terrorism and counter-terrorism challenges, in order to empower NATO and our global partners to meet future security challenges.

COE-DAT offers exceptional education and training opportunities to NATO member countries, Partnership for Peace, Gulf Cooperation, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and other global partners. This is one of our Centre's most significant contributions to NATO.

COE-DAT has established and maintains relationships with a wide community of interest and collaborates with many other institutions, such as academia, international organizations, other centres of excellence, and military academies in order to build a common understanding of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism. This will be reflected in the outstanding lineup of speakers at this event, who will be presenting their valuable perspectives.

The Combined Terrorism Experts Conference and Defence Against Terrorism Seminar serves as a distinguished platform for fostering collaboration, networking, and the exchange of information regarding terrorism and counter-terrorism issues among policy makers and Strategic and Subject Matter Experts from Allied and NATO Partner Nations.

The event will span over two days, featuring panels that will present a range of topics as outlined in the agenda. The program has been crafted to encourage debate and facilitate the exchange of perspectives among attendees, which is why each day includes a dedicated panel for discussions. Notably, this year's edition will also showcase a static display of military equipment related to counter-terrorism, generously provided by Türkiye Presidency of Defence Industries.

As will be clearly stated in our disclaimers, the ideas and opinions articulated here are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views of COE-DAT, NATO, or the Nations. In the event that you have a differing opinion on certain content, you will be given the opportunity to share your insights.

We hope that you will find the combined event informative, engaging, and valuable.

Before we commence the first session, I would like to express my gratitude to our academicians and partners for their tremendous support and participation.

I would also like to congratulate COE-DAT entire team for their hard work and dedication to make this event happen.

Finally, I extend a genuine welcome to all the speakers and attendees who have journeyed from afar or made the difficult decision to postpone or cancel other obligations to be present at our event. Your commitment is sincerely appreciated.

I am confident that you will appreciate the event, and I look forward to receiving your thoughts and feedback as the conference progresses.

Thank you for your attention!

Halil Sıddık AYHAN

Colonel (TÜR A)

Director, COE-DAT

DAY I

Keynote Speech

Mr. Gabriele CASCONE,
Head of Counter-Terrorism Section, Operations Division, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium.

Dear Ladies, Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to have the opportunity to offer these opening remarks for this years' Terrorism Experts Conference and executive level Seminar here in Ankara. Allow me first and foremost to thank you to Col. AYHAN and his staff for the invitation and for the opportunity to be here with you today.

So, as I was reflecting on what I could include in these opening remarks, unsurprisingly, one of the first things that came to my mind was a sentence from the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept. Many of you who work in counterterrorism have likely encountered it numerous times: *"Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and prosperity."*

Let me start not by the most direct asymmetric threat, which everybody knows is very important to NATO. It is one of the two major threats for the alliance, but to focus on these small statements: "in all its forms and manifestations." I think these words point out that the threat environment related to terrorism is constantly changing. What was valid yesterday is not valid today and will be even more different tomorrow. This is a fact that the program of this event clearly demonstrates.

This new threat environment was already brought to the public's attention at this year's summit when the NATO Secretary General's Special Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, Thomas Goffus, highlighted some of our foremost concerns. This short summary includes:

i. terrorist weaponization of cutting-edge technologies,

ii. the evolving chaotic and unpredictable nature of the attacks we witness inside and outside the alliance, and the

iii. alarming movement of terrorism's center of gravity occupying new landscapes but comprising the same malignant networks with which we have all become well acquainted.

Collectively, these challenges represent a major cause for concern for the alliance. Echoing again the Special Coordinator's words, the evidence is clear: *terrorists and terrorist groups are becoming more sophisticated, **with adversaries leveraging the increasingly available potential of the Internet, 3D printing, and artificial intelligence.*** They are becoming less predictable as the size and scale of terrorist attacks change, most evidently in the concerning trend of lone-wolf attacks that we see across the Euro-Atlantic region.

Finally, there is more widespread concern with alarming evidence that terrorist operations are extending even deeper into our southern neighborhood, multiplying across the most complex terrains and fragile societies. Within this context, which requires a concerted international effort, what is NATO doing to continue to be one of the significant actors in the international fight against terrorism?

The first point that I would like to make is that ***the first requirement is to understand the threat.*** So, I am very glad to see that these developments are reflected in the discussions that we are having here today and tomorrow, from exploring the dynamics and complex geographies that nurture terrorist activities to reviewing the latest and future tools and tactics employed by terrorists. Events such as this one represents key occasions to deepen our collective understanding of these challenges and develop appropriate solutions to some of our longest-standing dilemmas.

In addition to the understanding part, let me move a bit more into the action part. We have just finished conducting a major effort in the last year to renew and update the alliance's overall approach to counterterrorism, the results of which can be found in our two latest principal guiding documents approved by the NATO Heads of State and Government at the Washington Summit this July, which are the 2024 updated Counterterrorism Policy Guidelines and the updated Counter-terrorism Action Plan. Let me mention in passing—although it is not such a small remark—that both of these documents make express reference to the role of COE-DAT in the alliance's counterterrorism effort.

Starting with the policy guidelines, these seek to lay down the main principles under which the alliance should contribute to the international fight against terrorism. They reaffirm our commitment to comply with international law, to support allies, and to ensure non-duplication and complementarity. In concrete terms, these guidelines identify the areas where NATO can most efficiently contribute to the international effort against terrorism. In particular, they ensure adequate capabilities and preparedness, improve our collective awareness of the terrorist threat, and enhance our engagement with other key players in this effort.

The Counterterrorism Action Plan operationalizes these guidelines. It seeks to substantiate the ambitions laid out in the guidelines through concrete actions, such as integrating counterterrorism across relevant NATO planning and exercises, supporting the development of specific capabilities, and identifying focal areas of engagement and cooperation with partners and critical stakeholders.

This work is essentially focused on two pillars of work:

1. ensuring that allies have adequate counterterrorism capabilities,
2. engaging with partners.

Capabilities. Against a myriad of threats old and new, NATO aims to support allies in having the capabilities required to confront this spectrum of challenges by focusing on areas where NATO has recognized expertise. This is one of our guiding principles—to work on what we know. For example, NATO actively works to develop and deploy counter-unmanned aerial system capabilities for force protection by addressing doctrine and standardization, and by conducting training exercises and experimentation. Other areas where the alliance has acquired substantial expertise and continues to conduct work include countering improvised explosive devices and improving chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) defence, particularly in light of the possible use by terrorists of these CBRN threats.

A very promising area of work concerns the collection, handling, and exchange of information and data collected on the battlefield, what I like to describe as ***"battlefield forensics."*** This refers both to technical exploitation—the collection of information and material that has been in the possession of terrorists and other

adversaries using scientific tools and analysis to support primarily military outcomes—as well as battlefield evidence, which involves using the outcomes of these scientific tools and analyses obtained by the military to support law enforcement processes and legal proceedings.

Moving to the work with partners, in a complex geopolitical context, partnerships have become a core focus of our alliance, and counterterrorism is no exception to this trend. The appointment of the Special Coordinator represents a fresh opportunity to engage with our partners, identify synergies, and find areas of complementarity towards our collective efforts. On a practical level, NATO has conducted several iterations of counterterrorism-relevant trainings for our partners, particularly our southern partners. These trainings cover areas such as battlefield forensics, maritime situational awareness, maritime interdiction operations, protecting cultural property to prevent the illicit financing of terrorist operations, developing interagency cooperation, and sharing best practices to ensure maximum preparedness and cooperation during a CBRN attack.

We are also exploring additional areas where we can further develop our efforts with our partners. The first one that springs to mind is ***border security,*** as we are quite advanced in developing specific training in this area. Moving forward with the renewed mandate from allies, we anticipate that our engagement with partners will accelerate in the near future as we explore new opportunities to reinvigorate our work, for example, with our Central Asian partners, establish new lines of work with our African partners, and continue to prioritize further cooperation with other international organizations.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to COE-DAT for the great support and cooperation with myself and my colleagues in the Counterterrorism Section. NATO's COEs are essential in ensuring an innovative and diverse approach to some of the most complex domains, and threats, and COE-DAT is no exception here in Ankara. The energy, expertise, and continued professionalism of the COE-DAT staff, combined with the extensive program of yearly projects and events, testify to its fundamental contribution to NATO's counterterrorism work. We are very glad that we can always count on you for a wide range of activities for which we consistently receive excellent feedback from participants. I am especially grateful for the courses you provide at the Centre, the experts you contribute overseas, and the unwavering support you offer towards our work with partners, particularly in implementing the defence capacity-building packages. I look forward to further cooperation.

This concludes my opening remarks, and I look forward to the next two days of discussions.

Thank you very much.

Panel 1: Counter Terrorism and Counter Insurgency Operations/ Integration of Instruments of Power in CT

Non-kinetic activities as effect multiplier in Counter-Terrorism

Dr. Graig R. KLEIN, Institute of Security & Global Affairs, Leiden University, The Netherlands

In his presentation, Dr. Graig KLEIN emphasizes the significance of integrating non-kinetic tools into counterterrorism (CT) strategies to combat the evolving threat of terrorism. His argument is grounded in the recognition that terrorism persists partly due to the adaptive strategies of terrorist groups. While kinetic measures, such as military operations, have traditionally dominated CT-efforts, Dr. KLEIN highlights the underutilized potential of non-kinetic tools to disrupt terrorist activity by influencing their strategic decision-making.

Dr. KLEIN referred to Perliger and Milton's (2018) study of bilateral counterterrorism cooperation, which provides clear definitions of kinetic and non-kinetic operations that were necessary for classifying several types of cooperation. Kinetic operations are "military or police operations that were designed to arrest, kill, or otherwise directly intervene against terrorist organizations." Non-kinetic operations are "joint legislative initiatives, cooperation in eliminating avenues of terrorism finance, funding of one country by another, intelligence sharing." Therefore, Dr. KLEIN holds that the use of non-kinetic CT tools can be conceptualized within a deterrence framework. He foresees that individuals engage in a behavior or pursue an objective if the perceived benefits outweigh the perceived harms. In the context of terrorism, this means that individuals and groups will engage in terrorist violence if they think there is more to gain than there is to risk from supporting terrorism or perpetrating terrorism. In other words, countries can pursue tactics and strategies aimed to convince an adversary with whom they do not want to engage in a certain behaviour because the risks or potential costs of doing so are more than the potential gains or benefits.

The main question directing Dr. KLEIN's analysis was: "How can the balance of potential benefits versus potential costs be manipulated or changed to make the risks or costs of supporting terrorism or committing terrorist acts outweigh the benefits?" The presenter qualified this question as challenging, on least of the terms, since individuals who follow extremist pathways have already decided that the status-quo costs are not high enough to deter their behaviors or actions. The status quo rules addressing terrorism-related offenses, therefore, may need to be amended or changed to increase the costs. Previous research investigates how terrorism influences CT legislation changes and the adoption of new CT laws and regulations. Nevertheless, according to the presenter, this does not help us understand potential deterrent effects of CT-related legal changes.

Dr. KLEIN posits that the rules are adjusted to increase the costs of supporting extremist groups or committing terrorist violence, then individuals may adjust their cost-benefit calculations to account for the new, additional, or expanded risks, punishment, and costs of their actions and behaviors. In terms of non-kinetic CT, he holds that this can be done by amending, updating, or changing laws and policies that regulate definitions, criminal procedures, security powers, or punishment for supporting or engaging in terrorism. Amended or new laws can be aimed at terrorist groups, terrorist fighters, or civilians thinking about passively or actively supporting terrorist groups or engaging in terrorist violence.

Measuring Rule Changes

As part of his European Union funded research project, Terrorist Group Adaptation Patterns and Lessons for Counterterrorism, Dr. Klein and his associates look at how different countries implement counterterrorism practices, policies, and procedures. This has led him to the development of the Comparative Counter-Terrorism Dataset (CCTD), which contains information on CT in 108 countries from 2010-2020. CCTD is a first-of-its-kind, cross-national time-series counterterrorism dataset. The data are coded from the United States (U.S.) Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism (USCRT). The reports provide descriptive accounts of changes in legislative, law enforcement, counter-financing, counter violent extremism, and border security policies and procedures, as well as kinetic and non-kinetic operations.

It was observed that in total, CCTD contains 1,004 country-year observations where there was a USCRT. One piece of data collection focused on legal changes made in a country per year. In this presentation, terrorism/ CT legal changes were measured in three ways:

1. whether there were any legal changes.

2. the type(s) of legal change(s).

3. the policy area(s) of the legal change(s).

Overall, it was observed by Dr. KLEIN that in 48.1% of country years there was at least one legal change. And within these 491 country-years, 74.5% report only one legal change.

Statistical Analysis & Results

According to his model, the potential effect of legal changes in a year are tested against the number of terrorist attacks in the following year, leading to the conclusion that: if this form of non-kinetic CT is effective in increasing the costs of terrorism, then we should observe a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks the following year. The relationship is assessed using two different measures of terrorism:

1. Domestic terrorist attacks, and

2. International terrorist attacks.

Dr. KLEIN notes, furthermore, that there are significant differences in ideological motivations, frequency of attacks, and socio-political factors that influence domestic and transnational terrorism differently. In fact, according to the presentation, Table 1 summarizes demographic, political, and security control variables that are included in the statistical models to account for additional or alternative conditions that are known to influence to rate or frequency of terrorism per year.

Table 1: Control Variables Included in the Statistical Analyses

Characteristic	Rationale
Human Rights	(Dis)-respect for human rights can influence the occurrence and rate of terrorism (Piazza & Walsh 2009; Piazza 2017)
Democracy	Political competition can increase the risk of terrorism. Research has identified both positive & negative correlations between democracy and terrorism (Chenoweth 2010; Martin & Perliger 2012; Choi & Salehyan 2013; Gelpi & Avdan 2018)
GDP per Capita [natural log]	Level of economic development can impact the rate of terrorism (Krueger 2007; Choi 2010; Piazza 2006; 2011)
Total Population [natural log]	Larger populations provide more targets, are harder to secure, and larger populations may contain more terrorists (KLEIN 2024)
Ongoing Civil War(s)	Terrorism can be part of civil war dynamics and armed conflict processes (Findley 2012; Fortna 2015; Stanton 2019)
Number of Terrorist Attacks the Previous Year	Terrorism can follow temporal dependence and thus increases or decreases could be related to trends or the previous year independent of other factors (LaFree et al. 2010; 2012)
Geographic Region	The rate of terrorism varies by region (LaFree et al. 2010; 2012)

The Risk of Kinetic Techniques: He shared examples where the use of government force has inadvertently led to an increase in recruitment, particularly among far-right groups. Research involving two-hundred militants showed that some joined terrorist organizations as a response to state actions.

Legal and Legislative Changes: Dr. KLEIN discussed how changes in laws and regulations can significantly impact the risks associated with accessing extremist content, supporting terrorist organizations, or engaging in violence. These changes include:

- Increasing prison sentences.
- Defining terrorism more strictly.
- Restricting funding and communications.
- Implementing social media content moderation.
- Designating terrorist groups or individuals.

Impact of Legal Changes on Terrorism: Studies showed that 48% of the analyzed countries implemented legal changes, and efforts were made to measure the frequency of terrorism post-legislation. The data suggested a decrease in domestic terrorism following these changes, making them an effective deterrent.

Cooperation and Agreements: Dr. KLEIN highlighted that cooperation between states, particularly in terms of agreements, significantly contributed to the reduction of terrorism. He noted that in 55.7% of cases, agreements were linked to the most significant decreases in terrorist activity. The nature and content of these agreements were also examined, showing that in-group dynamics and symbolic measures, such as communication and propaganda sharing, played a significant role.

Combining Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Approaches: Dr. KLEIN concluded by stressing that combining kinetic counter-terrorism efforts with the rule of law and non-kinetic approaches can function as a force multiplier. However, he cautioned that not all applications have a deterrent effect, reinforcing the importance of careful integration between kinetic and non-kinetic strategies.

Kinetic and non-kinetic CT should not be seen as independent approaches; rather, they can be combined to create force-multiplying effects. Changing the rule of law to deter radicalisation and terrorism is one non-kinetic approach. But governments should be careful with how they wield this tool. Not all legal changes deter terrorism. Governments should think about how legal changes can influence the costs or risks of supporting or engaging in terrorism. Governments should strategize how to most effectively manipulate or change the costs for potential recruits, supporters, and/or terrorists when considering legal changes to deter current and future threats. In many ways, this reflects how COIN thinking, theories, and operations have evolved over time and suggests that there is a difference between CT and COIN. In short, CT is not just about neutralizing direct or immediate threats (i.e., the terrorists), it also should identify and deploy non-kinetic tools to increase the costs of supporting or committing terrorism.

Winning Hearts and Minds: Counter-Terrorism Policy Examples, Implementation and Challenges

Assoc. Prof. Efe TOKDEMİR, Bilkent University, Türkiye.

Assoc. Prof. Efe TOKDEMİR goes over some of his past and current research that tackles ***nonviolent strategies embraced by both non-state armed groups, and governments.*** He starts with some conceptual clarification, as he uses certain concepts interchangeably such as terrorist groups, insurgent groups, or rebel groups. However, he points out that they are all armed groups, non-state armed groups, regardless of the strategies they are engaged in.

There are numerous definitions of terrorism, and it is a very loaded term. Assoc Prof. TOKDEMİR states that the theoretical framework he uses can be applied to any group that challenges government authority, regardless of how we label or define them. The second term he touches upon is the "***constituents***." Constituents are defined as "*the subset of citizens that non-state armed actors claim to represent*". By constituents, he does not mean members of these organizations or those in support of them, but rather the group of people whom these organizations believe they can represent or with whom they can affiliate. Thirdly, refers to the term "*concessions*." Concessions refer to any type of reformation attempts initiated by governments targeting these constituencies. What matters is that we consider all such efforts.

The aim here is to respond to two questions:

1. How do governments respond to radicalisation, insurgency and terrorism?

2. How do people respond to these strategies, implemented by non-state actors and governments?

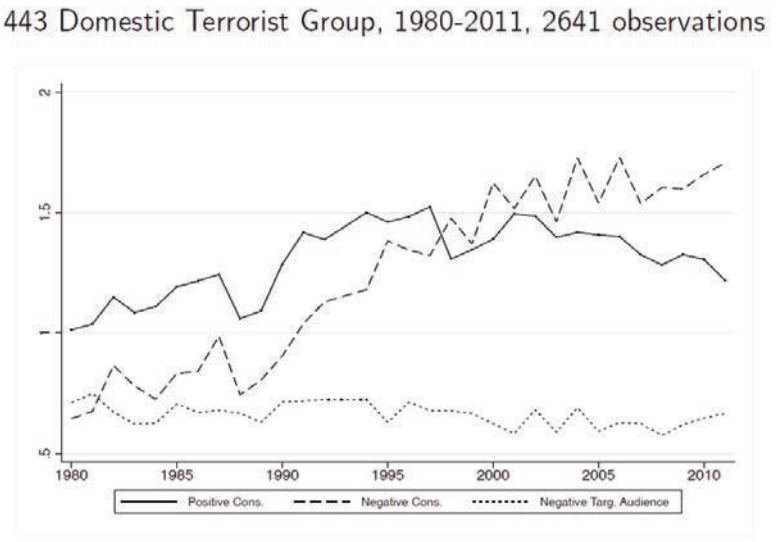
The objective of Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR's presentation *is to examine government-constituency relations as well as the relations between non-state actors and their constituencies*. The main contribution is focusing on attractive strategies, relaxing the assumption of a homogeneous audience, and showing the dynamic and strategic relationship between multiple actors. Some of the arguments he presented during the Conference here are also well-established in his previous book, The Battle for Allegiance.

When we talk about conflict dynamics, we usually focus on dyadic strategies between governments and non-state armed actors, the armed struggle. Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR delves more into the nonviolent aspect of the conflict. Since these groups are organizations, thinking about Maslow's hierarchy of needs reminds of the fact that they must survive first. To do so, we see that they engage in some type of relation with these citizens or whoever they can refer to, either through constructive or destructive deeds. In the end, they try to secure support from this subgroup of people. In return, governments, through governance and counter-insurgency strategies, try to maintain their positions and uphold their authority and legitimacy.

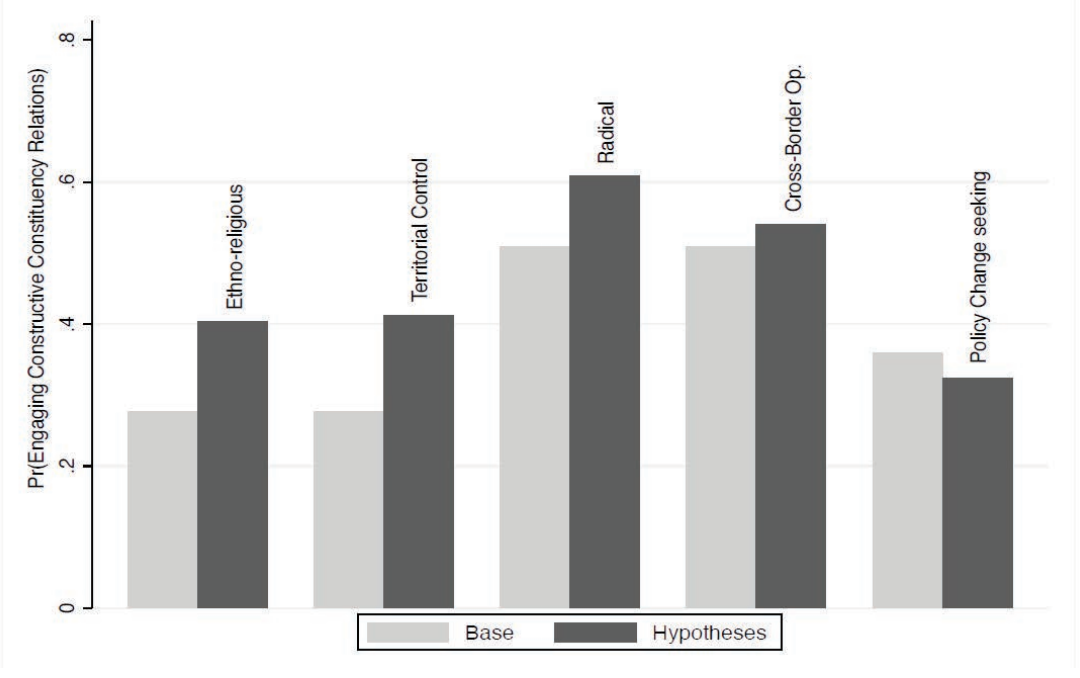
Instead of focusing on dyadic strategies, Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR is looking at triadic interactive strategies, placing citizens at the core of the examination. A further investigation or an updated theoretical depiction would be as follows: Previous literature on counterterrorism policy mostly focused on dyadic relations then the counter-insurgency strategies, also accounting for citizens. Here, I will specifically focus on what he calls "countering ",

which involves policies directed at constituencies and strategies that specifically define a subgroup. Because these organizations need resources, they need to garner support from the audience, and they need recognition. First and foremost, they have to survive. How violent or brutal they are is another question, but survival is key. In return, they engage in relations with their constituents, either constructive or destructive. These relations may come with high or low operational costs, with varying returns. The risk lies in the constant return: they will try to secure high returns by offering some form of rebel governance actions to their constituents.

To understand what type of groups are engaging in these strategies in relation to their constituents, Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR collected a data set covering 31 years and more than 400 domestic terror groups.



The first line shows the variation over time in regard to positive and negative deeds they offer to their constituents. Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR observed that many groups engage in both constructive and destructive actions simultaneously. This also depicts why it is important to focus on the nonviolent aspect of conflict.



Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR mentiones that the probability of engaging in constructive actions with their constituents increases if the groups are ethno-religious, if they control some territory, if they are more radical in their demands, if they engage in cross-border activities, and if they seek policy change. *The type of group can actually determine what kind of relation they will try to develop with their constituents.*

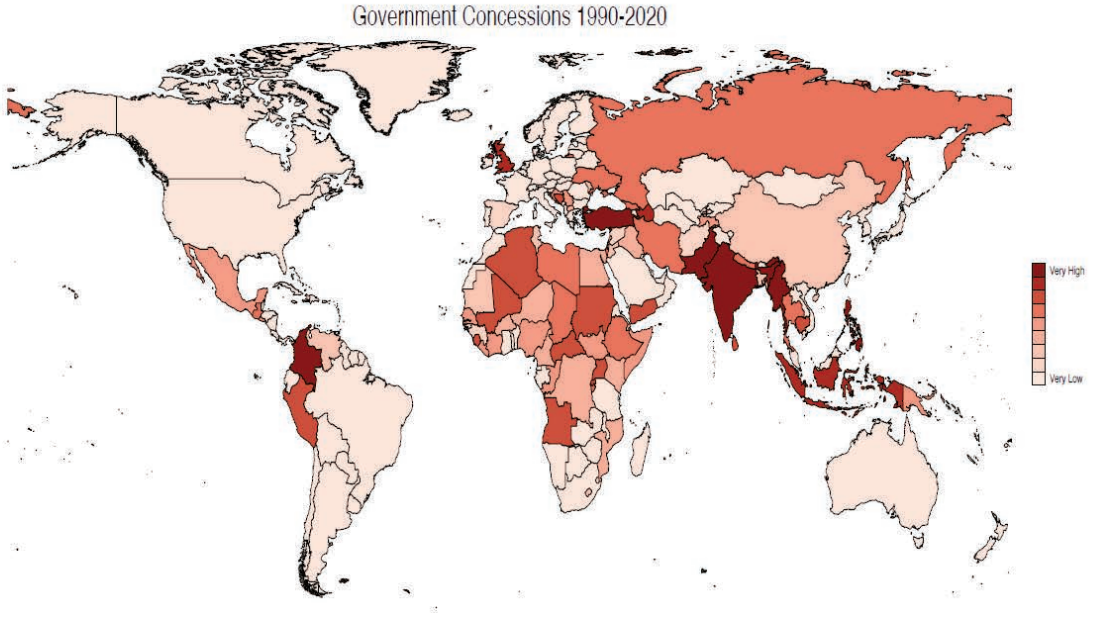
Therefore, what will be the reaction of the governments, and under what circumstances could this be affected? One thing previous research shows that it is really difficult to defeat non-state actors solely using military strategies. *In fact, only 3.5% of all domestic terror groups are militarily defeated by the government.* An alternative strategy would be to negotiate with them; however, negotiating with terrorists or non-state armed actors is not always an effective strategy, and it also burdens extra costs on the governments.

Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR quotes from Margaret Thatcher, the former British Prime Minister, "*We, in Britain will not accede to terrorist demands... For in conceding [to] terrorist demands the long-term risks are even greater than the immediate dangers.*" The response has been to defeat them with laws and democracy. Similarly, Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani at the time said, "*We will reform our tribal areas economically, politically and socially through measures that address the needs of the people Pakistan will not negotiate with terrorists our policy aims to marginalize terrorists*."

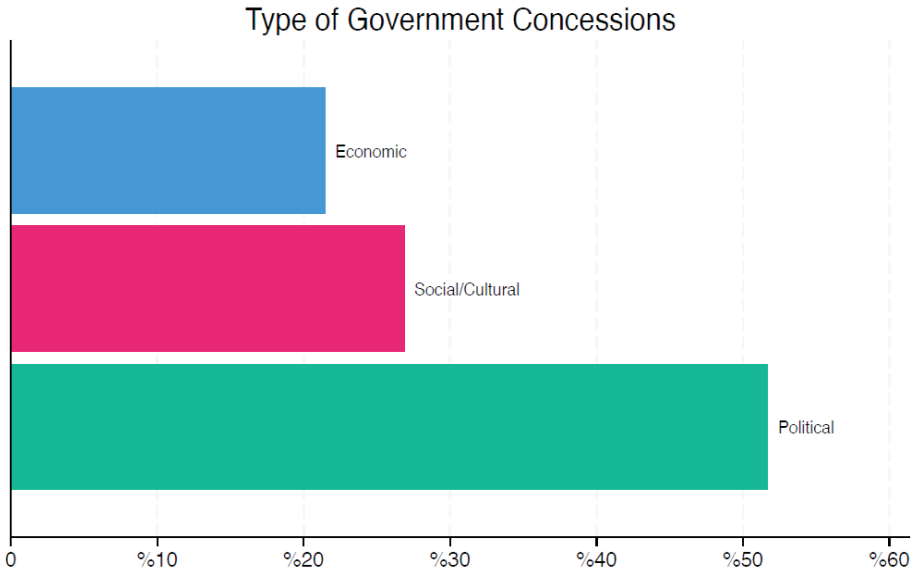
The policy, then, is to marginalize the terrorists by rendering them unnecessary. By doing so, governments can offer some concessions to the constituency, engaging in policies and offerings that prevent extreme demands from non-state armed actors. This can destroy the justification for the violence coming from these actors while allowing governments to preserve their reputation. However, it is not easy to do this all the time. If it were, all governments would implement it immediately and resolve the issue.

What is the problem? These strategies are costly. First of all, countries have limited economic, social, and political resources, and sharing these resources can cause problems. Additionally, it might cost the government domestically, as hardliners might react negatively. In many countries dealing with insurgencies, terrorism, and radicalisation, the governments are elected and responsible to their electorates. Therefore, they must employ constituency concessions selectively.

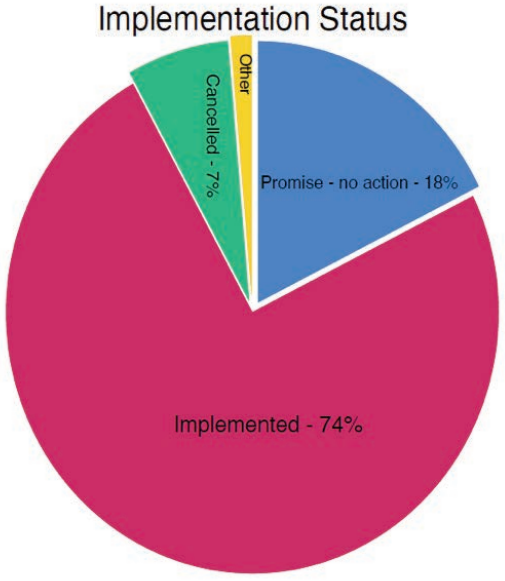
Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR's research also focuses on what type of governments employ which strategies and under what circumstances. Previously, Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR collected data over a 30-year span from 1990 to 2020, covering countries with a history of conflict in 77 countries and the constituents of 321 non-state armed actors, as defined in the UCDP dataset. Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR developed a standardized algorithm and applied it to Lexus Nexus, which gathers all world news together, and manually analyzed more than two million articles. Out of these, 9,000 relevant articles were edited, and 4,000 were coded, covering different types of concessions. Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR coded information about their types, initiating actors, coverage, novelty, conditionality, scheduling conditions, implementation status, and institutionalization levels. Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR reminds that this is an ongoing research funded by TÜBİTAK, the Turkish National Science Council.



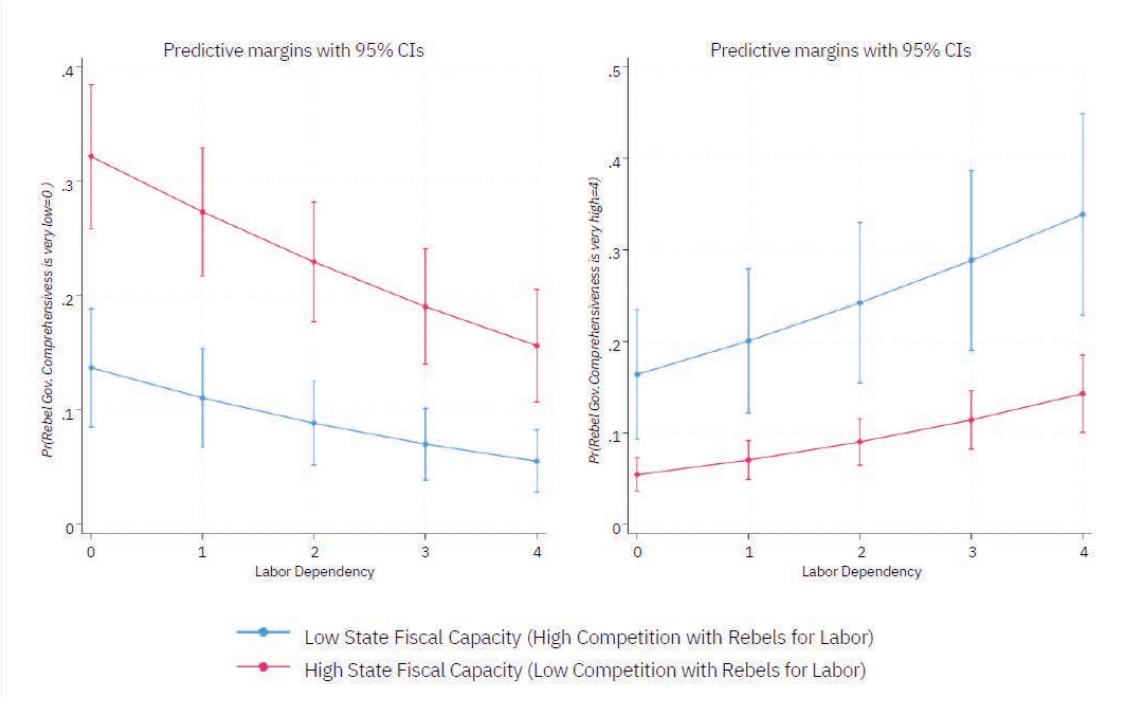
Then, Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR shares the preliminary findings. Through some descriptive analysis, he mentions that his goal is to demonstrate the significant variation in these policies. Based on this variation, if we can understand the root causes and the outcomes, we can come up with policy tools, as well. For example, we aim to identify what kinds of concessions are more effective, under what circumstances they are effective, and why.



Most of these concessions are political, and they do not add up to 100% because some concessions are both political and economic, or political and social-cultural. The majority of the time, initiating actors are not heads of state, government spokespeople, or local officials, but third actors. This is important in terms of accountability: once promises are made, it matters who made them and who should be held responsible if they are not kept. Regarding *demographic coverage*, most of the time, these concessions are offered to all constituents rather than just a small portion. In terms of geographic coverage, some concessions are regional, while others are nationwide. Concerning mobility, the majority of them are not novel; they are simply policy offers that were made in previous years and then re-offered. In terms of ***conditionality***, the majority are not tied to any condition, such as stopping activities or other demands. Additionally, most of these concessions do not announce when or how they will be implemented. As for implementation status, most of the concessions are implemented, but almost 20% are not. Some are just simple promises; they were dictated but never actually taken into consideration. In terms of *institutionalization*, we see that the large majority of them are never institutionalized. These were just discussions in public affairs, but they remained unresolved and eventually disappeared.



Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR also provides analytical findings on how governments respond to these changes. Specifically, we are examining the labour dependency of some non-state armed actors, which aim to extract economic revenues from natural resources. On the Y-axis in the Figure below, the probability of comprehensive rebel governance activities is presented. As shown, with the increasing labour dependency of these non-state armed actors—who need labour to extract resources like mines and other things—we observe that they engage more in governance activities toward their constituents.



How do governments respond? On the right-hand side, we see that when governments observe these groups needing labour to extract resources, they are more likely to offer comprehensive concessions to their constituents, aiming to neutralize these actors.

Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR investigates the micro-level ramifications of these processes. Just because governments engage in concessions as a counter-terrorism tool, this does not necessarily make them effective. There might be competing mechanisms at play. Even if some positive effects are observed, these mechanisms may win the allegiance of the constituency. Alternatively, the credit might go to the non-state armed actors, or, once these concessions are offered, they might create a backlash and further frustration among the population if they are not implemented properly or institutionalized as promised.

Despite talking about conflict dynamics, Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR concludes that violence is not the only tool used by terrorist groups. Scholars and counter-terrorism bodies should remember that some organizations try to survive by gaining support and resources. To do so, they engage in governance activities with their constituents. Governments must be aware of this. These groups are engaged in strategic calculations, and governments respond by offering additional strategies. *The key lesson from this research is that we need to better understand under what circumstances, and for whom, what types of leaders, governments, and concessions will be effective, and how and when these concessions will work at the individual and micro level.*

Military contributions to the de-radicalisation process of foreign **terrorist fighters**

Dr. Heather GREGG,
Marshal Center, Germany

Dr. Heather GREGG's presentation focuses on the significant role that militaries could play in deradicalizing foreign fighters as well as contribute in other aspects of countering violent extremism. To expand on these ideas, Dr. GREGG starts by discussing three key terms: *Preventing Violent Extremism*, *Disengagement*, and *Deradicalisation*.

As with most definitions, there is no universally agreed-upon meaning for these terms. *Preventing Violent Extremism* is about inoculating individuals and communities to prevent them from becoming radicalized in the first place, as the term suggests. *Disengagement* involves physically separating individuals from the groups and support systems that promote violent extremism. *Deradicalisation*, on the other hand, seeks to change beliefs with the goal of reducing violent behaviour.

Dr. GREGG stresses that militaries have a role to play in each of these three approaches to countering violent extremism. First, in terms of Preventing Violent Extremism—while this panel focuses on non-kinetic activities, she mentions something kinetic here, as it is relevant. Though controversial, removing ideologues from the battle space can be a way of preventing violent extremism. For instance, the U.S. killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an ideologue whose ideas were believed to fuel terrorism against the United States, in Yemen in 2011. However, this approach comes with significant challenges.

The first challenge is the possibility that targeting ideologues could contribute to further radicalisation by amplifying the ideologue's profile and message. The second challenge is legal. The legality of killing a U.S. citizen like al-Awlaki, even one involved in violent activities abroad, remains under debate in U.S. courts. These challenges illustrate the complexities of using military force in preventing violent extremism.

The second area is the military's contribution to disengaging foreign fighters. Disengagement, again, is the act of separating foreign fighters from the groups with which they interact and individuals they might radicalize. Here, kinetic activity might also play a role. This would involve killing or capturing individuals—not necessarily ideologues—with the goal of neutralizing them.

Secondly, detention facilities serve as spaces where individuals can be physically separated from their groups. However, it is critical that this is done correctly, with these individuals separated appropriately from others, not just within their own organizations but also potential allies. This was a hard-learned lesson for the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan. Dr. GREGG reminds that, unfortunately, the international community is quite familiar with what happened at Abu Ghraib in the early stages of the Iraq War. Following this, a specific task force, *Task Force 134*, was established to manage detention facilities more effectively. She brings up a photograph of Camp Bucca, a detention facility in southern Iraq. Initially, any high-value individuals—whether Republican Guard or religious extremists—were detained there. Notably, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who later became the leader of ISIS/

ISIL/DAESH, was detained there, and it is believed he was allowed to recruit and spread his message during his time at Bucca. ***The proper separation and identification of detainees in detention facilities is crucial to prevent further radicalisation.***

Then she turns to deradicalisation programs. Here, detaining individuals and combining this with deradicalisation programs provides a potential strategy for militaries to address the foreign fighter problem. However, for this to be effective, several factors must be addressed.

First, as mentioned, it is essential to identify who is in detention facilities and to separate them to prevent further radicalisation. *Secondly*, deradicalisation experts are needed. Typically, militaries lack this capacity; therefore, they must collaborate with other government agencies or, more likely, NGOs and similar organizations for assistance with altering belief structures. *Third*, detainee treatment is crucial. As Task Force 134 recognized, the Geneva Conventions mandate certain provisions for detainees and prisoners of war. Beyond this, offering opportunities for family visits, releasing individuals who have changed, and providing religious education and vocational training for life beyond detention are vital to the deradicalisation process.

Within all of this, it is important to acknowledge a cautionary note regarding detention facilities and deradicalisation programs more broadly. Dr. GREGG reminds that civilian programs have faced significant issues with recidivism, to borrow a criminology term. In the United Kingdom, for example, two individuals believed to have been deradicalized and reintegrated into society later committed terrorist acts. This includes Usman Khan, who carried out the 2019 attack that killed two people in London, and Sudesh Amman, responsible for a knife attack in 2020. This highlights the inherent risks in such programs, which must be carefully considered.

For instance, alliances and coalitions are essential for tackling the foreign fighter problem. Foreign fighters, by definition, cross borders, which necessitates a regional, if not global, response. What one country does affects others, so coordinating efforts is absolutely critical, though not always simple. On the other hand, measuring effects is very challenging. How do we know if programs are effective or counterproductive? In most cases, determining success at a strategic level is difficult because of what we call "*over-determination*" in political science—too many variables influence outcomes; therefore, it is hard to pinpoint the impact of any single intervention.

The temptation is to measure inputs, such as the number of people removed from the battlefield, detained, or enrolled in programs. However, this doesn't truly measure effectiveness—it merely gauges activity. Similarly, a lack of attacks could be seen as a success metric, but many factors influence this, such as disruptions to an organization's command structure or a group's strategic decision to lie low and wait for a better opportunity.

Despite these complexities, Dr. GREGG emphasizes that deradicalisation programs are worth pursuing, with ongoing efforts to refine best practices and continue studying outcomes. She also reminds that at the strategic level, it is challenging to measure impacts due to the multitude of contributing factors.

In conclusion, Dr. Heather GREGG offers three takeaways and one final thought.

Takeaway #1: The military's role in deradicalizing foreign fighters is small but significant. Detention facilities play a key role in disengagement and potential deradicalisation, but this requires a clear understanding of detainees and collaboration with experts who can facilitate the deradicalisation process.

Takeaway #2: Military operations can remove ideologues from the battlefield. However, such actions carry the risk of further radicalizing critical groups. This trade-off highlights the need to synchronize military operations with broader campaigns to prevent future radicalisation.

Takeaway #3: Coalitions and alliances are essential. By nature, foreign fighters cross borders, necessitating a collective approach. What we do in one country inevitably impacts others, underscoring our interdependence.

Final Thought: Dr. GREGG views this challenge as an ecosystem, with foreign fighters forming just one part. This ecosystem also includes ideological leaders, organizations that plan and execute violence, supportive communities, and the often-overlooked families of fighters. Addressing deradicalisation effectively requires a holistic approach that considers the entire ecosystem—not just the fighters themselves.

Q/A Session of Panel 1

Question 1:

You mentioned that deradicalisation requires expertise. What are the qualities, experience, or background of a deradicalisation expert, and does this vary depending on the group being deradicalized?

Dr. Heather GREGG:

The answer might be surprising, and I can share some anecdotal examples. One example comes from Egypt. After the 1996 Luxor massacre, efforts began in prisons to address the ideology underpinning such violence. Initially, imams from Al-Azhar University, known for educating religious leaders, were brought in. However, it quickly became clear that to the radicalized individuals, these imams were seen as part of the problem and lacked credibility. Following incidents like Abu Ghraib, there was a new type of interpreter introduced—someone who was not just a language interpreter but also a cultural and religious mediator. This person worked with U.S. leadership to help recognize effective strategies and actions. In summary, selecting credible voices often requires a trial-and-error approach. It depends on finding individuals on both the government and detainee sides who can convey the right message and be accepted as legitimate by those being deradicalized.

Question 2:

The second question was about the game-theoretic approach in your presentation. Dr. GREGG mentioned that measuring effectiveness is tricky due to overdetermination with numerous variables involved. How confident are you that these policy changes are indeed the leading variables responsible for the observed changes? Also, regarding the deterrence game concept, is it accurate to assume that terrorists make rational, cost-effective decisions, especially in cases like suicide attacks where the cost is inherently high?

Dr. Graig KLEIN

Regarding the measurement issue, it is challenging because we can only measure observable events, such as the number of attacks or casualties. Assessing effectiveness can be complex, as not all influencing factors are visible. We attempted to account for reverse causality, examining whether an increase in attacks the prior year prompts legal changes.

From a statistical or econometric side, we did look at this idea of reverse causality where if more tax the previous year are causing legal changes and we find very little effect of kind of a security threat motivating legal change. Within the models we did control account for many other dynamics of countries that affect the frequency of attacks. We controlled for democracy level, respect for human rights, how many attacks there were the previous year. We looked at what geographic region they were in their population, their GDP. All in all, lots of other things that we know affect these rates of attacks. Therefore, I can say that deterministically legal change happens, then automatically we see this. At least those that were highlighted, we have at least 95% confidence. We are very confident that if these legal changes go into place, it seems to at least represent or approximate something happening in the sphere that is leading to a reduction in terrorism the following year.

In terms of that the second question about the cost effectiveness, the very same puzzle has long been in the questions I have sought answers for. How would somebody lighting themselves on fire be a rational decision? And I think it is important for us to think about this cost benefit analysis or this kind of rationality approach that people are presented a choice and they are making these decisions with the best information they have at their hands or what is disposable to them. Therefore, we really come down to this idea of bounded rationality that people are making choices given how much information they have, the type of education they have, the type of upbringing kind of just what is put into their decision process.

There is a lot of research on the cost effectiveness of suicide terrorism. There is an article by Pape that argues suicide terrorism is effective against democracies because it has psychological effects on the civilian population. These democratic governments have to respond to it. For these groups, it can be effective for them to essentially use their resources to risk the loss of soldiers to perpetrate this attack because of the effects. We should often keep in mind the suicide attackers, the people who end up dying. These attacks often are not the highest skilled fighters that these groups have; therefore, they are not necessarily sending in highly skilled, highly trained individuals to do this that do risk future capabilities of the group. Additionally, there is a cost and if it rational that's going into it, sometimes they can entice these fighters by providing economic incentives to their families and they'll take care of them. Assuming this kind of rational approach gives us a way of trying to think about what these groups or individuals might do if this occurs, then here's what they could do here, their choices. Of course, there is variation.

Question 3:

My question is directed towards the kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to counter-terrorism. Considering the legal changes mentioned earlier, as well as factors related to social identity, nationality, and ethnicity, how can NGOs and international governmental and non-governmental organizations contribute to advocating for or advancing non-kinetic counter-terrorism principles?

Dr. Graig KLEIN

I think that finding is quite controversial and it links together lots of kind of tools or ways the government could approach this. Again, I want to be caution of those results that there are very few observations in the data where countries are actually doing this. Therefore, we need to untangle that a little bit more about whether it is issues of social identity, if it is citizenship rights, kind of who or what these are targeting, I think a lot of these are linked to the increase in foreign fighters and trying to deter foreign fighters trying to figure out ways to essentially make it costly to go and do this. However, in terms of those results, I would kind of caution thinking about what these are and from looking at the data and kind of eyeball observations, a lot are coming from Western democracies are largely going to be geared towards the idea of trying to deter foreign fighters from going abroad.

Dr. Heather GREGG:

A quick comment on getting NGO's or people outside the government to actually help governments and specifically militaries, I think that is an extremely challenging thing to do. One of the things I think the United States also learned from and has struggled with in both Iraq and Afghanistan, was trying to work with non-governmental organizations when NGO's did not want to be connected with military organizations. Because they were completely antithetical to what they were trying to do, and so and it sometimes was called weaponizing the humanitarian space. And therefore, I think this is a real challenge but not impossible. However, the concern with this piece of the puzzle is that if you get the wrong messenger in the deradicalisation program, it is going to be counterproductive. It will probably blow up and result in failure.

Question 4:

Have you ever considered looking at the situation where the constituency itself becomes alienated from the terrorist group?

Assoc. Prof. Efe TOKDEMİR

Actually, in the book we are addressing this. I am interested in under what circumstances, what type of groups engage in destructive or constructive deeds. And I was arguing that engaging in constructive deeds is costly. Every

single group cannot do it simply because they do not have enough resources, simply because their cost might be actually destroyed by other factors. Even though I did not present here, we tried to understand the outcome? Groups are engaging in some constructive deeds or destructive deeds in response to their own constituents and then what happens? It shows us that while in the short run, even though destructive deeds might help them survive. They engage in force recruitment, child recruitment. Still, they recruit into their ranks, but in the long run it effectively diminishes the chances of succession from their end in terms of survival, in terms of achieving their goals, especially in terms of achieving goals because survival might not be a big issue all the time. It also comes back to the measurement problem. These groups sometimes are so small that this is why you cannot defeat them militarily effective because they do not have their battalions or their divisions. Just because they survive that it does not mean that they can achieve their goals. In order to survive the engaging some activities, but it becomes their fates eventually. So yes, it is a very important thing and we address this in detail in the book.

Question 5:

How much of what you presented here can be applicable while countering lone-wolf attacks?

Dr. Graig KLEIN

The idea of deterrence is still trying to essentially make accomplishing these goals harder or punishment more still can apply to the individual level, or really does apply to individual level and may work for lone wolves. One important part of what we have to think about is what does the outcome or what is the goal we want to do speaking like measurement issues? Is it simply there is less violence and lower attacks and that we live with the idea that there is some radicalized people out there who might believe in things but do not act on them and do not engage in violence?

Assoc. Prof. Efe TOKDEMİR

From a broader angle, to some extent applies. Remember, the actors and interaction between the actors and how these actors are acting rationally or irrationally in perceiving the world in perceiving these policies, we are talking about all types of radicalisation. The endpoint is violence. We relate that we are talking about the cells, right? We are talking about these different alienated/radicalized groups in the society and yes, there is a reason behind this. Therefore, these root causes should be addressed carefully.

In that sense, I believe any type of radicalisation in society might be investigated in this interactive nature of the relations. It is not only what the government does, or it is not only how rebels, insurgents, and terrorists treat their constituents. Without having all in the whole picture, we would not observe that specific policy. That is the real problem. Rebel groups would not engage in public goods provisions, health services, as many of them do right now, then the government might not take such actions to render their presence and effective. Therefore, it is like a competition between the actors. It is like a battle for the allegiance of the constituents.

Panel 2: Counter-Terrorism and Human Security

The Role of Gender in the Recruitment and Exploitation of Children by Non-State Actors

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES, Universidad Externado, Colombia

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES starts his presentation by explaining standpoint on *gender* which is used as an analytical framework to examine the experiences of others. He states that he evaluates the gender during his presentation as a method to understand the experiences of recruitment roles within armed groups of boys and girls. In the context of Colombia, experts tend to differentiate between recruitment and utilization in terms of gender. He discusses the recruitment and exploitation of children, specifically the role of children in armed groups beyond just being combatants. *These children serve in support roles, gathering intelligence, being used as sex workers, and more*. They are recruited into terrorism and violent extremism. Dr. CHARLES warns that in the international humanitarian sector, there is a move away from the term "*child soldier*" because it risks re-victimizing young people and overlooks the diverse experiences of youth in non-state armed groups. For this reason, scholars prefer terms like "*children associated with armed forces or armed groups"* or "*children involved in terrorism and violent extremism*."

Dr. CHARLES states that he would like to challenge the concept of *forced recruitment*. Is recruitment always forced? The term implies that most recruitment involves *abduction* or *kidnapping*. However, research shows that, while violent abductions do occur, they are not the most common experience for young people involved with armed groups, particularly in the Colombian context. *Framing children as passive overlooks their agency and the reality that even young people possess some degree of choice*. To fully understand their experiences in non-state armed groups, scholars must acknowledge their voices. This does not imply that their decision to join is fully voluntary. This grey area between forced and voluntary involvement poses a dilemma in research, as neither term accurately captures the experiences of young people in these contexts.

Dr. CHARLES reminds that his use of the terms "children" or "young people" in this presentation is referring to *anyone under the age of 18*. Although cases of children as young as six, seven, or eight years old being recruited exist, they are not the norm, especially in Colombia, where his research is focused. He mainly discusses teenagers. Even though their agency may be limited, children are still entitled to protection, a right that we, as adults, governments, and organizations, must reinforce. Focusing solely on the responsibility of non-state armed groups in forced recruitment overlooks the state's duty to protect its children. The state also has a responsibility in this matter.

In the global context, children continue to be recruited by non-state armed groups. It may be surprising that despite significant international efforts and advanced treaties such as the Cape Town Principles of 1997, the Paris Principles of 2007, and the Vancouver Principles of 2017—each expanding states' obligations in recruitment prevention—the number of children and young people being recruited has increased every year since 1997 and continues to rise. This remains a substantial issue.

Focusing on Colombia, Dr. CHARLES agrees that much of his research pertains to this context. *It is crucial to note that since 2016, when Colombia's largest leftist rebel group signed peace accords with the government, recruitment has reverted to pre-peace process levels*. This trend is directly linked to the dynamics of conflict within the country. With the FARC's departure from the Colombian conflict, a power vacuum emerged, now occupied by smaller organizations with criminal interests and FARC dissident factions, all competing to control illicit economies. In their drive for dominance, these groups require more manpower and are increasingly recruiting children and teenagers.

In another research project, Dr CHARLES shares that he mapped specific conflict dynamics not only to the numbers of children and teenagers being recruited but also to the methods of recruitment, which vary based on the specific conflict dynamics. Interesting statistics here show that, on average, boys serve 632 days as child soldiers, while girls serve slightly longer, at 642 days. This data covers the period from 2013 to 2022, based on UNICEF's periodic reviews, which occur every seven to ten years. A concerning trend observed in each study is the rising proportion of girls being recruited and exploited. Initially, recruitment figures were approximately 80% boys and 20% girls, but this gap has now narrowed to around 30–40% difference.

Before delving into the specifics of gender, he outlines some general dynamics related to recruitment. *Visibility* and *propaganda* play significant roles, as discussed in the literature. Push and pull factors are important when analysing why young people join armed groups. Push factors drive young people towards joining, while pull factors reflect why non-state armed groups seek to recruit children.

Push Factors. These can include socio-economic hardships, poverty, and community expectations. For instance, in Colombia, the ELN (a guerrilla group currently in peace negotiations with the government) implements a "*national service*" approach in Arauca, a Colombian state bordering Venezuela. Here, young boys considered unruly or undisciplined are often sent by their communities to join the group temporarily, returning with skills in trades like cooking or mechanics. This practice has become a part of community life in the region.

Pull Factors. Armed groups may recruit children for various tactical and economic advantages. Non-state armed groups often use child recruitment to generate fear or enhance public profiles. For example, Boko Haram in Nigeria heavily recruits children due to the young population demographics, making children more accessible for recruitment. Economically, children are cheaper to maintain, easier to control, and useful in roles where adults might face greater suspicion. Tactically, children and women can sometimes pass-through security unnoticed. For instance, in Colombia, women and girls are often not searched at police or army checkpoints, as few female soldiers are present. Armed groups leverage this by deploying women and children for tasks like drug trafficking, expecting them to avoid detection. In this way, both push and pull factors shape the involvement of children in armed conflicts, each playing a role in the ongoing recruitment challenges.

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to recruitment and exploitation due to a range of factors, including structural, emotional, cultural, and situational elements.

Structural Factors: Economic marginalization, social isolation, and living in poverty make young people more susceptible to recruitment. The lack of opportunities in education and employment pushes them toward armed groups as an alternative means of survival and advancement.

Emotional Factors: Many young people join armed groups seeking revenge. This could be in response to personal loss, such as the death of a family member at the hands of a rival group or even the country's armed forces. Seeking revenge can provide a sense of purpose, making it a powerful motivator.

Psychological Factors: Living in marginalized contexts can lead to low self-esteem and a sense of hopelessness, which young people attempt to overcome by joining armed groups. They often seek purpose, meaning, and belonging, which they find in the structure and ideals of these groups.

Cultural Factors: In some regions like Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico, drug trafficking organizations exploit cultural trends to attract young recruits. For example, these groups may create music labels, use rappers, and target youth with the allure of material goods like money, cars, and guns. This access to material wealth and the glamorization of violence becomes an attractive proposition for vulnerable young people.

Ideological Factors: Young people, still in the process of developing their moral frameworks and understanding of the world, are often more impressionable and vulnerable to ideological manipulation. Armed groups exploit their susceptibility to influence and promise a sense of purpose through violent extremism.

How Children Are Recruited?

Dr. CHARLES states that recruitment can take many forms, ranging from forceful abduction to more subtle, coercive tactics.

Abduction: In some cases, children are kidnapped and forcibly taken into armed groups.

Quota: In certain regions, recruitment is organized through quotas by the rebel groups forcefully. For example, in Colombia, every family in a village controlled by these groups may be required to provide one child to a rebel group.

Schools: Teachers are sometimes coerced into identifying children for recruitment, and failure to comply can have dire consequences. In some instances, teachers have been murdered for refusing to identify children for recruitment.

Economic Enticement: Recruitment may also involve the promise of financial rewards, such as salaries, motorbikes, and material goods, which entice young people to join armed groups.

Personal Relationships: In some cases, young people are recruited through relationships with members of the armed groups, such as boyfriends or girlfriends.

Ideology and Indoctrination: Young people are often indoctrinated with the group's ideology, which is another powerful tool for recruitment. This indoctrination helps reinforce loyalty and commitment to the group.

These push and pull factors illustrate why children and young people are highly vulnerable to recruitment and exploitation by non-state armed groups, as they are often driven by a complex mix of emotional, social, and economic factors.

Online recruitment again in Columbia is something that is relatively new. On the other hand, Dr. CHARLES shares that boyfriend and girlfriend relations are discovered to have quite disturbing trends where older teenagers are employed by rebel groups or paramilitary groups to infiltrate schools and start romantic relationships with younger teenagers, so it applies to both boys and girls, and then those boys and girls will be manipulated into joining the armed group. Interestingly though, as well, scholars have also seen this as what is called in some of the literatures as a *survival strategy.* For instance, once a girl has been recruited, sometimes they think it is safer for them to then become the girlfriend of a commander within the rebel group or within the paramilitary group or within the drug trafficking organization. They see it as a way of protecting themselves because then they are protected from some of the most dangerous roles within the non-state armed group (NSAG).

In terms of the roles of children plays in NSAGs, Dr. CHARLES identifies 5 key strands: Finance, Intelligence, Logistics, Military, and Sicariato Strands. *Finance Strand.* This is related to anything to do with illicit economies, so children that work in cocoa plantations or children that work in cocaine laboratories, children that work as sex workers, the logistics strand is related to those that traffic drugs, weapons and money around the country or sometimes outside of the country. *Intelligence Strand.* To say that both boys and girls can become competent in Colombia, the intelligence strand children can live in their communities but be paid to provide intelligence on their neighbours from the present of armed rivals etcetera to the non-state armed group and it has been evident how young women in particular can be paid to infiltrate. There are even some cases where some NGO's can be infiltrated.

Additionally, Dr. CHARLES also talks about some statistics to to challenge predominantly held beliefs. He finds it interesting that despite all of these ongoing issues, research has been quite slow to catch up. He acknowledges that there are some really good studies on the role of gender and recruitment, but they are few. To simply put, Dr. CHARLES reiterates that boys are often targeted through appeals to their or to appeals to traditional concepts of masculinity, framing their participation, the demonstration of bravery, strength and honour. Boys may also be recruited in context of poverty or lack of economic opportunity, because often there is a pressure on boys to provide for their families to provide for their mothers, and many can even become fathers at very young ages and non-state armed groups can provide. Financial incentives or a sense of purpose in that. In that context, the male recruitment is also often facilitated through ***peer pressure***. Young men follow their friends or families into armed groups, and for many groups, especially religious extremists, men can be targeted through. Religious or political ideologies that position them as protectors of their community and faith.

Girls, on the other hand, can be recruited to fulfil support roles that align with their traditional kind of gender norms. However, Dr. CHARLES says that comes with a caveat because he thinks we are increasingly seeing how girls are recruited for combat and operational roles. Girls are often forcibly recruited or coerced through sexual violence or forced marriage is another common method and some groups manipulate the idea of motherhood, suggesting women fight for protecting their children and their community. There are cases where women and girls are often the perpetrators. They are used as suicide bombers. There are case studies of young girls being used as executioners.

Dr. CHARLES concludes his presentation by addressing vulnerabilities again and states that if counter-terrorism bodies understand, for example, girls and women are often used or are forced into recording through sexual violence, they can target those specific vulnerabilities and issues we need to understand the breadth of role of women and girls in non-state armed groups. We need to be able to counter extremist narratives that that promote gender discrimination. Dr. CHARLES recommends that ***rehabilitation, deradicalisation, reintegration programs need to be gender-focused.*** And all of this can help us prevent gender-based violence in counter terrorism operations as well as providing a deeper understanding of how gender impacts recruitment strategies of non-state armed groups.

Cultural Property and Terrorism Financing

Ms. Zeynep BOZ, Head of Combatting Illicit Trafficking Department, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Türkiye

During her presentation, Ms. Zeynep Boz reflects on the importance of cultural heritage. She begins by pointing out that fighting against any type of crime has its own features that may lead us to take more seriously by law enforcement, the military or high-level political decision-makers. However, when it comes to cultural heritage, there is a lack of devoted caution. Ms. Boz reminds that it was not until the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2199 that international high level decision makers started to talk about cultural heritage and its protection. This resolution includes three paragraphs referring to cultural heritage being damaging, destroying ancient sites, manipulate people. Make some propaganda of their own beliefs.

Ms. BOZ claims that cultural property does not only have economic value, but it also has an abstract value which is not necessarily always related to organizations, but also very much related to our military operation. That is, Ms. BOZ drives attention to the fact that when there is any military action that needs to be taken, any damage to the cultural heritage given destination, could benefit the other parties' interest since cultural heritage is something that establishes the link between the local population living in that area. Therefore, when there is a damage intentionally given to cultural heritage, whether by any terrorist organization or by any official network, has this same impact on people which cuts their links with their past and with their land.

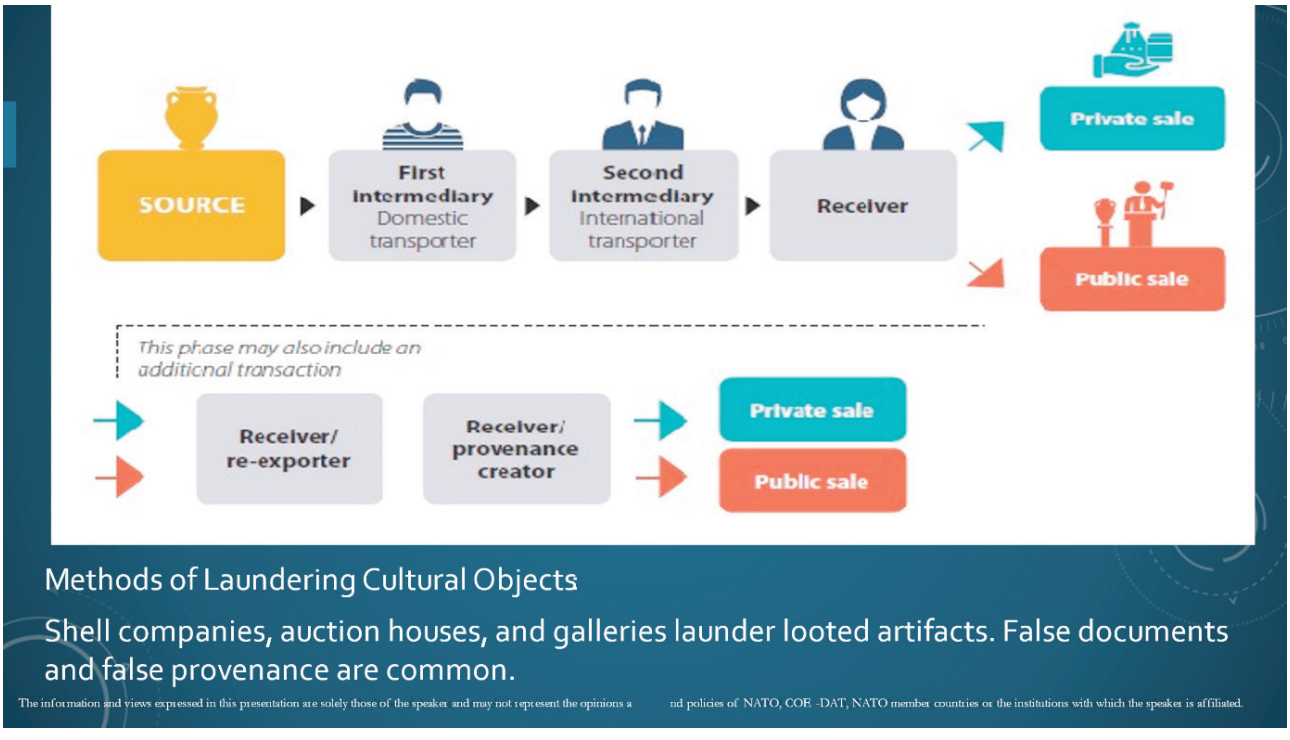
These do not need to be linked ethnically with that local group. Ms. Boz refers to various civilizations who lived and then collapsed in Anatolia, stating that all of them are not ethnically linked to Turkish identity, but they are all Anatolian cultural heritage and regional territorial understanding that we call them our cultural heritage. Therefore, this happens same in all countries and the link of cultural heritage with the people's identity, with their totally understanding, is the key in that presentation. Ms. Boz highlights that another international challenge regarding the illicit circulation of cultural heritage items is the disparity in national laws on this issue, preventing the establishment of a cohesive action plan.

Therefore, when such discrepancies are not overcome, this only serves for the purpose of illicit organizations, illegal organizations, be the tourist organization, be the criminal group. You are just letting them to benefit with having gaps between the different legislations. All in all, this is the reason why cultural heritage easily becomes an element for making money for terrorist organizations.

Ms. BOZ states that during its peak, ISIS/ISIL/DAESH controlled territory rich in archaeological sites, such as the UNESCO-listed city of Palmyra. They directly profited by selling looted objects and indirectly by taxing looters. ISIS/ISIL/DAESH viewed these objects as a means of generating revenue. They established a form of 'bureaucracy' to tax looters in exchange for permits to excavate ancient sites, profiting directly from the sale of artifacts. This was a highly organized effort that combined looting with criminal networks to smuggle these artifacts across borders and into global markets. *It is important to note that terrorist organizations* ***do not operate in isolation when trafficking cultural property***. They rely heavily on transnational organized

crime groups. These groups facilitate the movement of looted objects across borders, using their established smuggling routes and connections in the black market. Cultural artifacts, often small and portable, are perfect for this kind of illicit trade. They are easy to move and difficult to trace. These criminal networks act as intermediaries, working to conceal the true origins of these objects before they are sold on the international art market, often through legitimate-seeming auction houses or private collectors.

One significant case, Ms. BOZ reminds, demonstrating the connection between terrorism and antiquities trafficking is Operation HARMAKIS. In 2016, Spanish authorities broke up a criminal network that was trafficking antiquities looted from Libya. These antiquities, which included statues, coins, and other cultural objects, were being sold to finance ISIS/ISIL/DAESH operations. Authorities discovered that the objects were smuggled out of Libya and laundered through a series of intermediaries in Europe before reaching potential buyers. The operation was a major success in curbing one such trafficking route, but it also highlighted how deeply embedded these networks are across borders.



The illicit trade in cultural property relies on sophisticated methods of laundering these objects. One of the key methods is through the use of shell companies. These companies act as intermediaries, buying and selling the objects to conceal their origin. Another method involves freeports—secure storage facilities in countries like Switzerland, where art and antiquities can be stored without being taxed or inspected. This enables traffickers to hold objects for long periods, waiting for the 'heat' to die down before reintroducing them to the market. Fake provenance documents are also a common tactic, providing seemingly legitimate backgrounds for objects with illegal origins.

In recent years, the rise of social media and encrypted messaging platforms has provided new avenues for terrorists to advertise and sell looted antiquities. Social media platforms like Facebook and encrypted messaging apps such as Telegram have become hotspots for trafficking. In many cases, private groups on these platforms allow sellers and buyers to negotiate transactions away from the public eye. These platforms provide a level of anonymity that traffickers exploit, and law enforcement faces challenges in tracking down the origins of these digital sales.

To counter these issues, many countries have strengthened their legal frameworks. Anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorism financing (CFT) regulations are now being applied more rigorously to the art and

antiquities market. In the European Union, for example, auction houses, galleries, and dealers are required to perform due diligence checks on buyers and sellers, ensuring they're not unknowingly facilitating illegal transactions. The fight against cultural property trafficking requires a collaborative approach. Public authorities, private entities, and cultural heritage professionals must work together. This includes strengthening partnerships between governments, law enforcement, museums, and the art market to detect and disrupt these illicit activities. *Public awareness campaigns are also essential*. The general public, particularly buyers and collectors, must understand the risks involved in purchasing undocumented antiquities.

Ms. BOZ concludes that the trafficking of cultural property does not just erase history—*it actively funds terrorism, fueling violence and instability in already vulnerable regions*. This issue requires a global response. It is up to all of us—governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society—to continue building partnerships, improving enforcement, and raising awareness. Together, we can protect our shared heritage and prevent its exploitation for criminal and terrorist purposes.

Q/A Session of Panel 2

Question 1:

My question is related with the vulnerability of children against terrorist organizations. How can the local communities be empowered to prevent the exploitation of children, women in serious organizations while ensuring safety and long-term development?

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES

I think it is important to recognise that vulnerability is multi-dimensional. Vulnerability comes in various shapes and forms. It is not just about being young. It is not just about living in context of marginalization; however, there are emotional and other factors associated with it. Therefore, I think there needs to be efforts to involve the community in in prevention programs. Yet, it is often dangerous and prevention is really difficult because entering into these communities and talking about prevention puts for people that are doing it at risk and it puts the community at risk. Hence, what we are trying to do in Colombia at the moment is devise recruitment prevention strategies that do not mention the word recruitment and that do not tackle it directly. However, but we are working with some of the issues that, that are underlying. I mentioned in the presentation that ***children that become involved in violence often have low self-advocacy.*** As a result, we developed a strategy that improves the self-esteem that improves their self-efficacy as a prevention tool.

There are various agencies in Colombia including the military and armed forces involved in recruitment prevention; however, there is absolutely no coordination and I think that is one of the biggest issues because. These agencies are all working, perhaps in the same school, when there are ten schools in one town that need attention. All in all, I think we need to recognize vulnerability as multi-dimensional. Additionally, we need to better coordinate the strategies that we have within the agencies that that exist and then coming to the next point about unlimited agency.

Question 2 :

Can you further elaborate from the Colombian context about the gender responsiveness of the reintegration policies, successes and failures?

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES

Children are victims; however, we have to listen to children. We have to understand why they feel that they become involved in our groups, because unless we can do that, we cannot really address recruitment from a prevention standpoint, fully. If we believe that children are abducted or forced into recruitment, we need to understand why children sometimes feel compelled. We understand that they are living in a context where they perceive violence as a solution to a crisis that they are confronting. We need to understand how they perceive that crisis in order to relate that to prevention strategies, and that does not mean that we then label children as perpetrators. We should have a better understanding of why they perceive their situation as they do in terms of reintegration programs and gender. The short answer is it is limited in Colombia. There is not a specific gender-based element to the reintegration program. The official integration program is something that is being currently developed.

Panel 3: Counter-Terrorism Regional Focus - Balkans, Sahel & MENA

Analyzing the use of hybrid tactics and tools by non-state actors including terror organizations in Balkans

Prof. Birgül DEMIRTAŞ, TED University

The presentation of Prof. Birgül DEMİRTAŞ offers an analysis of the security in the Balkan region, especially after the 1990s. Prof. DEMİRTAŞ states that while global attention often centres on conflicts in the Middle East and Eurasia, the Balkans remain vulnerable to significant security risks. Although the wars of Yugoslav dissolution ended in 1999, their material and ideological legacies continue to destabilize the region. Some Balkan states suffer from fragile political and economic systems, a lack of democratic consolidation, and slow economic growth. These challenges, combined with the influence of ethnic nationalism and exclusive ideologies, have created an environment ripe for non-state actors to spread extremism.

One major security issue is the involvement of hundreds of militants from the Balkans in conflicts abroad, particularly with ISIS/ISIL/DAESH. Some of these fighters have returned to their home countries, posing a potential ongoing threat. Additionally, militants from some Balkan countries have joined Russian forces in Ukraine, highlighting the region's susceptibility to external manipulation. Non-state actors use various political movements, NGOs, and media platforms to propagate non-democratic and non-Western ideologies. They also employ modern technological tools, including cyberwarfare tactics, to advance their goals.

Prof. DEMİRTAŞ identified several key security issues that have emerged in the Balkans since the early 2000s. ***Ethnic nationalism,*** for instance, continues to be a divisive force despite the region's long-standing history of multiculturalism and coexistence. Although these countries had a tradition of living together peacefully for centuries, this harmony was disrupted in the 1980s, and they have yet to fully recover. Another ongoing challenge is the ***contested border*** between Serbia and Kosovo; Serbia's refusal to officially recognize Kosovo perpetuates tensions, hindering regional stability. Additionally, Balkan countries continue to grapple with their violent pasts, with many still perceiving themselves as victims of the 1990s conflicts. This perspective complicates efforts to objectively assess history. ***Economic insecurity*** also remains an issue, as low economic growth and high unemployment persist in the region, where some countries are still undergoing post-war transitions. The region's ***ambiguous relationship with the European Union*** further complicates its path to stability and democratic consolidation. ***Organized crime and illegal migration*** are also prominent concerns; the Balkans, as Europe's most destabilized region, serve as a hub for organized crime and a significant transit route for illegal migration, which terrorist organizations exploit to penetrate deeper into Europe. Finally, the region has yet to achieve desired levels of human security, contributing to societal fragility and compounding existing challenges.

Counter-terrorism Focus on the MENA Region

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF, Loughborough University, UK

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF highlighted the enduring and evolving nature of terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, focusing on the challenges faced despite ongoing counter-terrorism efforts. The main region grapples with persistent and evolving terrorist threats and despite the territorial defeat of ISIS/ISIL/DAESH, extremist groups have adapted by decentralizing and employing insurgency tactics. Counter-terrorism efforts have made a significant stride; however, challenges continue and political instability and socioeconomic challenges predominate.

Dr. ASHRAF outlined several key aspects of the current terrorist threat landscape. First, ISIS/ISIL/DAESH has resurged and is operating across multiple areas globally. A UN report from the previous year estimates that about 10,000 foreign fighters are active in these regions, and there is considerable evidence of the group's expansion into new areas, including the Sinai Peninsula and Libya. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates continue to exploit local conflicts, particularly in Yemen, where AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) is expanding its reach. Additionally, other groups like Hezbollah and the Houthi rebels present further challenges due to their political and military influence, often supported by external powers.

In terms of counter-terrorism efforts, Dr. ASHRAF noted significant international and regional initiatives. The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS/ISIL/DAESH and Operation Inherent Resolve have been instrumental in targeting the leadership of ISIS/ISIL/DAESH. At the regional level, the Arab League has implemented counter-terrorism measures. Dr. ASHRAF highlights that even though the League is not as prominent; however, in the ever-changing world the Arab League might be a permanent actor in this matter. He also touches upon NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative that can play further roles to increase the stability in the region. Yet, the repatriation of foreign fighters remains a major challenge due to the legal and security concerns associated with reintegrating former fighters into society.

Dr. ASHRAF also identified several challenges in counter-terrorism. Political instability in fragile or failed states remains a significant barrier, complicating efforts to stabilize the region. Additionally, socio-economic factors, including high unemployment and inequality, contribute to the radicalisation of individuals, making counter-terrorism efforts more difficult. Another serious threat for the region is foreign fighters. The threat they pose is likely to depend on the effectiveness of repatriation, prosecution, and reintegration efforts. Additionally, the increasing use of advanced technologies, such as drones, cyber tools, and cryptocurrencies, by terrorist groups has made detection more challenging and provided new avenues for funding their activities.

Looking to the future, Dr. ASHRAF outlined emerging trends in terrorism. The decentralization of terrorist groups is making it more difficult to detect and dismantle them. Terrorist groups are also shifting their strategies toward less governed areas where security vacuums exist, allowing them to exploit these regions for their activities. Dr. AHSRAF recalls that Middle East has become a battleground for various extremist groups which makes it even complicated to conduct operations to neutralize terrorists. Operations should be planned and carried out so carefully that the expected outcome should not be counter-productive.

To address these challenges, Dr. ASHRAF proposed several recommendations. A holistic counter-terrorism approach is needed, one that tackles the root causes of extremism, such as socio-economic disparities and political instability. Enhanced international cooperation, including cross-border collaboration and intelligence sharing, is essential to disrupting terrorist networks. Finally, countering violent extremism through rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for foreign fighters and radicalized individuals is critical to mitigating long-term threats. Dr. ASHRAF's analysis underscores *the necessity of a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to counter-terrorism in the MENA region, one that balances immediate security measures with long-term solutions to address the underlying causes of extremism.*

Exploring further engagement in the SAHEL

Dr. Aleksander OLECH, Head of International Cooperation at Defence24, Poland.

Dr. Aleksander OLECH's presentation on "Exploring Further Engagement in the SAHEL" addresses the expanding scope of terrorism in the Sahel region, including its impact on the various aspects. The Sahel is a semi-arid transition zone spanning from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. It is located between the Sahara Desert and fertile savannas. There are hot, dry conditions that influence the environmental situation. It includes parts of several countries, including Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Eritrea, northern Nigeria, and northern Cameroon. 64.5% of population is under 25 years old. Therefore, there is an opportunity for economic growth through education and vocational training. Those young people now and in the future need to find a place where stability appears in terms of living conditions, climate, nutrition, and many other areas they are concerned now.

Dr. OLECH describes as Africa's "Achilles' heel," where key challenges include religious extremist insurgencies, political instability, and environmental degradation. The region has increasingly become the focus of international actors, bringing both advantages and disadvantages. Among the prominent players in this landscape are China, France, Russia and the US. Dr OLECH states that France and the U.S. operate side-by-side but without deep collaboration. Even though actions may appear aligned; these lack true strategic partnership to address complex challenges in the region. The primary point to emphasize is the necessity of cooperation with the EU, the US, and France. Currently, this collaboration is essential, and in the future, these countries will need to work together if they aim to prevent destabilization. Without collective action, the risk of widespread collapse looms. These nations have already demonstrated that they are less effective without mutual support.

On the other hand, the Sahel region faces a complex interplay between environmental challenges and migration issues. Worsening environmental conditions, including extreme heat and scarce resources, are driving large populations to migrate in search of liveable conditions. Although various initiatives have been launched to address these crises, they have often fallen short, failing to provide sustainable solutions to the ongoing environmental and humanitarian struggles in the region. Migration flows are likely to grow, and it's important to note that migration can go in two directions: within the African continent or outward, with migrants seeking

opportunities in regions such as the European Union or the Middle East. This trend underlines the urgent need for proactive policies and cooperative efforts to manage migration and its impacts effectively.

Dr. OLECH underscores that the Sahel region is a complex landscape of diverse groups, each contributing to a challenging security environment. Tribal and ethnic groups, alongside religious extremist and armed groups, interact with the region's national forces and rebel factions. Since the mid-2000s, terrorist organizations, particularly groups like ISIS/ISIL/DAESH and JNIM, have expanded their influence, with a notable surge in activity around 2018-2019. These entities now operate across key areas, necessitating coordinated strategies to curb their influence and protect local populations.

Future threats from these groups remain significant, with ISIS/ISIL/DAESH operating distinct factions in West Africa and the Greater Sahara. Religious extremists are active in strategic locations, as demonstrated by recent high-profile attacks. This escalation raises critical questions about regional stability and the risks posed by ongoing terrorist activity, underscoring the urgent need for robust, adaptive countermeasures.

Dr. OLECH provided an overview of various international actors' roles in the Sahel region, highlighting both successes and challenges. In terms of France's involvement, he focuses on Operation Serval in 2013-2014, deploying 5,100 troops and achieving a joint victory with Mali. This was followed by Operation Barkhane from 2014 to 2022, which, despite peaking at 5,000 soldiers, ultimately struggled to suppress terrorist activities. Another actor, Germany has focused on peacekeeping and diplomatic initiatives, such as the Sahel Plus Initiative, promoting stability by working with neighboring countries. Meanwhile, Italy has expanded its diplomatic influence by opening new embassies across Africa and intensifying its humanitarian and security cooperation efforts, with President Mattarella underscoring this renewed focus on Africa through his recent visits.

Hungary has shown growing interest, particularly in Chad, with potential plans to deploy 400 soldiers to strengthen their partnership. ECOWAS's role is increasingly critical, as it intensifies its efforts to counter terrorist threats in countries like Benin, Nigeria, Togo, and Ghana. In a notable recent development, the UAE signed an agreement with Chad in 2023 to deploy troops, highlighting the Middle East's rising influence in the Sahel amid reduced Western involvement.

Other smaller nations, such as Estonia, have also contributed, deploying troops in Mali during Operation Barkhane to strengthen ties with France and African countries, with a focus on diplomatic and economic cooperation. The US has maintained a comprehensive engagement strategy, including military support, with troops stationed in Niger until a recent coup in July 2023 led to their withdrawal and the closure of a key drone base in Agadez, which had been instrumental in counterterrorism surveillance in the region.

Türkiye's approach in the Sahel region emphasizes a blend of diplomacy, economic investment, and defense cooperation, aiming to build stability through multifaceted partnerships. Diplomatically, Türkiye has strengthened its presence with embassies in key locations such as Bamako, Ouagadougou, and Niamey, establishing a foundation for ongoing engagement in the region. Economically, Türkiye's focus includes infrastructure projects, from building airports to developing metrobuses, which play a pivotal role in enhancing connectivity and supporting local economies. Turkish Airlines has also made a significant impact by connecting African cities to global routes, fostering economic links and cultural exchanges. On the defense front, Türkiye has established strategic partnerships, particularly with states in the Gulf of Guinea, to bolster regional security. Defence agreements, like the one with Niger, aim to empower local forces through training initiatives to counter insurgencies and maintain stability. This multifaceted strategy underscores Türkiye's commitment to a sustainable and resilient engagement in the Sahel region.

China has emerged as a major investor in the Sahel, promoting its "respect for sovereignty" principle as it engages with both civilian and military regimes. Its interests in the region are heavily driven by the Sahel's wealth in natural resources, including oil, uranium, and lithium. Chinese companies, like Ganfeng Lithium, are making

significant investments in Mali's lithium reserves, aiming to secure resources critical for global energy markets. At the upcoming FOCAC Summit in 2024, President Xi Jinping reiterated China's strategic focus on Africa, pledging $51 billion in infrastructure funding. This commitment underscores China's dedication to building long-term partnerships across the continent. Key projects, such as oil pipelines, are part of this investment agenda; however, these initiatives face risks due to regional instability and threats from rebel groups, which challenge the sustainability of China's investments.

Dr. OLECH underlines that NATO's comprehensive engagement in the Sahel remains limited. Increasingly frequent terrorist incidents should encourage NATO to take a more proactive approach to addressing the threat to Europe's southern flank. A comprehensive security strategy should include counter-terrorism, regional stability and reducing dependence on Chinese and Russian influence. NATO's future role in the Sahel should increasingly be focused on counter-terrorism, migration management, and expanding operational reach. As security threats intensify, NATO aims to provide critical military, logistical, and strategic support to regional partners, helping stabilize fragile areas and curb terrorist activities. Beyond military engagement, NATO is also working to strengthen political and economic connections with Sahelian countries to foster resilience and sustainable development. Another significant aspect of NATO's strategy should involve countering the growing influence of China and Russia in the region.

In conclusion, the Sahel faces an increasingly complex and challenging environment marked by rising extremist threats, the persistence of military regimes, and severe climate impacts. These issues demand urgent attention and a strategic reevaluation by international actors, particularly the EU and NATO, whose current policies may require adaptation to respond effectively to the region's evolving security landscape. Additionally, the presence of growing foreign influence from China, Russia, and other external actors, including the UAE, Iran, India, and Türkiye, highlights the strategic importance of the Sahel and the need for balanced partnerships that support stability rather than deepen conflicts. The consequences of inaction in the Sahel could be costly. With expanding terrorist networks and a worsening migration crisis, establishing a robust political and military presence has become essential to promote governance, strengthen institutions, and counterbalance the influence of competing global powers. To ensure the Sahel's future stability, Dr. OLECH warns that the international community must prioritize coordinated efforts to address these challenges head-on, fostering a secure and resilient region through collaborative and sustainable interventions.

Q/A Session of Panel 3

Question 1:

My question is related with the vulnerability of children against terrorist organizations. How can the local In the context of the Sahel, how should NATO approach great power competition involving the US, China, and Russia? How can NATO organize its efforts effectively?

Dr. Aleksander OLECH:

NATO's focus in the Sahel should adapt to the shifting dynamics of great power competition. As highlighted, collaboration and proactive engagement are essential. NATO could begin by enhancing cooperation with democratic states in the region, providing training, support, and the necessary tools to address security challenges. This approach emphasizes building capacity.

Drawing parallels with the past, NATO has successfully started adapting to unforeseen challenges, such as deploying forces in regions like Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—countries that were not anticipated to host troops decades ago. Similarly, the Sahel's evolving dynamics could necessitate new forms of engagement sooner rather than later.

A practical example is the cooperation seen in training initiatives. For instance, Polish soldiers training Senegalese forces in Dakar exemplify how NATO members can contribute through targeted programs. Expanding such efforts across the Sahel would allow NATO to support local forces in combating terrorism, managing crises, and addressing migration challenges without overextending its direct presence.

Question 2:

Considering your optimistic scenario of European integration, is it still feasible to construct a unified European identity given the lack of agreement on shared history? What are the specific obstacles hindering the pursuit of this integration process?

Prof. Birgül DEMİRTAŞ:

European identity is not static—it evolves, shaped by different interpretations and contexts. For this identity to fully develop and support integration, several critical changes are needed, both within individual countries and the European Union itself.

Firstly, key countries must implement significant reforms to consolidate their democratic systems, strengthen their economies, and transcend exclusive ethnic nationalism. Cooperation among nations and the ability to address these internal challenges are essential steps toward a collective European identity.

Secondly, the European Union needs to redefine its geopolitical vision. It must recognize that durable peace on the continent can only be achieved through deeper integration, particularly by including Western Balkan countries. However, the current approach of offering intermediate measures, such as visa liberalization, without full membership prospects, reflects a lack of commitment. This ambiguity in the EU's stance undermines the motivation of Western Balkan nations to engage fully in the integration process.

To sum, the obstacles to constructing a European identity and advancing integration include internal challenges within member states, a fragmented EU geopolitical vision, and a lack of clear and inclusive policies toward prospective members. Achieving a cohesive European identity requires both structural reforms and a shift in mindset within the EU to prioritize long-term unity and cooperation over short-term political calculations.

Round table discussion/ Wrap Up Day 1 and Outlook Day 2

Dr. Graig R. KLEIN emphasized the risks and consequences of both kinetic and non-kinetic counter-terrorism operations, stressing the importance of legal practices and international cooperation in these efforts. *Assoc. Prof. Efe* ***TOKDEMİR*** argued that one-size-fits-all policies are ineffective in countering terrorism. He suggested that the focus should be on people, not just security, recognizing the multi-dimensional nature of conflict and advocating for the inclusion of non-violent perspectives. He emphasized the need to consider causes and consequences at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. *Dr. Heather GREGG* discussed the military's specific, though limited, role in deradicalisation, particularly for foreign terrorist fighters. She noted the importance of careful separation in detention facilities, drawing on lessons learned from U.S. detention policies, as studied by RAND and the U.S. Naval War College.

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES made a brief but pointed remark about the importance of incorporating gender perspectives in counter-terrorism efforts and drew attention to child recruitment by terrorist organizations, providing examples regarding the Colombian context. *Ms. Zeynep BOZ* argued that cultural heritage should not be viewed as a luxury or a revenue source for organizations but rather as an essential aspect that needs to be protected. She stressed the need for cooperation with civil experts to better understand and safeguard cultural heritage.

Prof. Birgül DEMİRTAŞ focused on the role of democratization in the Balkans and its link to terrorism. She noted that the lack of consolidation in these regions makes them more vulnerable. She explained that negative peace, where conflicts are frozen without addressing underlying issues, can lead to further problems, especially in the Western Balkans. *Dr. Afzal ASHRAF* pointed out that the future of terrorism and counter-terrorism would be much more about the MENA region. He stated that there are not any new policies or strategies that do not first identify and address the causes of failures in that policy and in that strategy over the last several decades. However, globally, the future of counter-terrorism will depend largely on how the international justice system evolves, especially in terms of human rights and equality. *Dr. Aleksander Olech* highlighted the necessity for NATO to strengthen cooperation with African nations. He stressed the importance of empowering young, educated individuals in these countries to direct their potential toward securing a better future, pointing out that Africa's problems should be addressed within the region.

Mr. Gabriele CASCONE emphasized that terrorism is a persistent threat that will not go away. He underscored the importance of readiness in addressing this challenge, noting that CT has increasingly become interrelated with various fields, including law enforcement.

During the roundtable discussion, a participant inquired about the reasons why terrorist groups, particularly in Africa, align with ideologies such as those of al-Qaeda or ISIS/ISIL/DAESH. The participant asked *Dr. Afzal ASHRAF* to elaborate on the motivations driving individuals to embrace these ideologies, which have become prominent across the globe, especially in Africa. In his response, Dr. ASHRAF explained that the appeal of these groups' ideologies is primarily grievance-based. He pointed out that al-Qaeda's and ISIS/ISIL/DAESH's ideologies often frame local grievances as religiously motivated, though their religious arguments are deeply flawed. The key factor driving individuals to these ideologies is the experience of injustice and corruption in their environments, particularly within countries with corrupt governments and poor living standards. Dr. ASHRAF further clarified that it is not solely about poverty but about the indignity and lack of self-respect felt by people. This feeling is exacerbated when they perceive that their governments are failing to solve local issues, instead relying on Western powers to intervene. Dr. ASHRAF also distinguished between al-Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL/DAESH, emphasizing that al-Qaeda's goal was primarily political: *to replace what they saw as a defunct political system in the Muslim world*. Although their rhetoric appeared to target the West, their real aim was to expel Western influence from their region. On the other hand, ISIS/ISIL/DAESH, led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, *sought to create a so-called caliphate through territorial control, pushing for a more aggressive territorial strategy*. Dr. ASHRAF asserted that neither group would ultimately succeed due to the exclusivist nature of their ideologies, which cannot appeal to large populations in the long run.

As a second question and a comment, an audience member raised a concern about the gap between the ideal strategies for counter-terrorism, such as focusing on non-kinetic tools and human rights law, and the current geopolitical realities. The participant argued that the ongoing violence and the radicalizing effects of media coverage on global audiences, including college campuses, pose significant challenges for counter-terrorism efforts.

In response, Dr. Aleksander OLECH acknowledged the question and emphasized the importance of media outreach as a non-kinetic approach to counter-terrorism. He shared that Poland, while not as active in Africa as other countries, has launched projects with the UK and other nations to combat disinformation. These initiatives focus on engaging with journalists and analysts to address misleading narratives, such as those propagated by Russia. Dr. OLECH highlighted the challenge of countering such narratives but stressed the importance of media engagement, particularly in African countries where the US and other global powers are competing for influence. He also reinforced the idea that ***military approaches alone are not sufficient***, especially in regions like the Sahara, where media outreach and cooperation with local experts are crucial.

A participant raised a question regarding the concept of hybridity in counter-terrorism strategies. They pointed out that, on one hand, there is the increasing use of conventional forces and irregular tactics, and on the other hand, terrorist organizations are increasingly enhancing their ability to utilize technology. The participant asked Dr. Heather Gregg if she had any additional insights on the matter. Dr. Heather GREGG shared her thoughts on the evolving nature of terrorism and counter-terrorism strategies. She pointed out that while terrorist organizations are increasingly utilizing advanced technology, several countries counter-terrorism strategies demonstrate a failure to adopt a comprehensive, whole-of-society or whole-of-government approach. Dr. GREGG emphasized that the lessons learned from broader strategies are not being fully applied in these countries' current actions. She also noted a shift in youth engagement contrasting with the previous perception of apathy. While this activism could have unintended consequences, Dr. GREGG believes it reflects a positive trend, showing that young people care deeply about global issues, which, despite potential challenges, could ultimately be beneficial.

A participant asked about the shifting geopolitics, particularly in relation to energy geopolitics in Africa, focusing on critical minerals like lithium and cobalt, which are essential for renewable energy. They inquired about the debates surrounding these issues and how they might impact regional security, including tourism. In response, Dr. Alexander OLECH reflected on his previous presentation, where he had discussed the rich natural resources of the Sahara region, including gold mines, and how these resources are being exploited by various global powers. He highlighted those countries like Russia, for example, are

extracting gold from Sudan to finance their activities against Ukraine. Other countries, such as Australia and Canada, are also active in Africa, particularly in the extraction of resources, though not always through military means, but rather politically and economically. Dr. OLECH emphasized the ongoing competition for African resources, noting that, despite military presence, the primary focus remains on economic exploitation. This competition is intensifying as countries like France look to diversify their resource sources, moving away from Africa toward regions like Mongolia. He also pointed out that *Africa's resource wealth presents both opportunities and challenges for regional security, with local governments needing to carefully navigate international deals*. Dr. OLECH suggested that *African nations should critically assess the contracts they* ***sign with foreign powers, ensuring that these agreements are beneficial for the continent's long-term interests.*** Dr. OLECH concluded by citing a statement from Malawi's Foreign Minister, who acknowledged the necessity of cooperating with countries like China, despite differences in values, because of the practical support, such as funding for infrastructure projects like the building of a parliament. This highlighted the pragmatic approach some African nations take in balancing their political ideals with the economic benefits of international cooperation.

Assoc. Prof. Efe TOKDEMİR was asked to elaborate on the concept of "*marginalization*" of terrorist organizations, particularly in the context of Pakistan, which he had mentioned earlier. The question sought to understand more about the process of marginalization and how it functions in countering terrorism. In his response, Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR explained that the *marginalization process refers to a strategy in which the state works to reduce the legitimacy and support of non-state armed actors, such as terrorist groups, by addressing the root causes that sustain their relevance*. He emphasized that when states face political violence, such as terrorism or insurgency, there are typically three options: *military defeat, negotiation, or marginalization.* He further clarified that *military defeat*, though often considered the most direct solution, is difficult because such groups are small and challenging to decisively eliminate. *Negotiation*, on the other hand, involves making concessions to armed groups, but this can be costly and may encourage further rebellion. The third option, *marginalization*, is strategically focused on diminishing the support these groups have from their constituents by addressing the underlying grievances or needs that fuel their actions. This can include winning the hearts and minds of the affected populations, thus making the group less relevant and its goals less supported. Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR stressed that marginalization involves tackling the root causes of conflict, which can either be based on greed (where groups seek resources or power) or grievance (where groups are responding to injustice or oppression). By addressing these issues, the state reduces the political motivations behind the violence, making the terrorist group less attractive to potential recruits and supporters. In essence, marginalization seeks to neutralize the political aspects of terrorism, making it easier to combat without relying solely on military force.

Dr. Mathew H. CHARLES was asked to compare the recruitment and exploitation of children by non-state armed groups, specifically considering gender differences, such as the recruitment of boys versus girls or the exploitation of women. In his response, Dr. Charles explained that he did not find it useful to make a strict comparison between the recruitment and exploitation of boys versus girls or women. He emphasized that both forms of recruitment—whether of boys or girls—should be considered together as part of a broader issue. He also mentioned a significant project led by the United Nations Office for Children and Armed Conflict called the "All Survivors Project," which is focusing on sexual violence and exploitation against boys, noting that while this issue is more prevalent among girls, it is still an important problem for boys, as well. Dr. CHARLES argued that distinguishing between "recruitment" (where a child is taken from their home and joins an armed group) and "exploitation" (where a child stays at home but engages in criminal activities) is no longer a useful analytical tool, especially in the context of conflicts like the one in Colombia. He explained that even after peace processes, children in Colombia can still be recruited; however, they may remain in their homes and participate in criminal activities part-time. He also shared that his team has developed a model that integrates both recruitment and exploitation into a single framework, arguing that the distinction is often blurry and that children's involvement in armed groups should be viewed holistically. The type of armed group and its governance model in the community plays a key role in how children are recruited and exploited. In conclusion, Dr. Charles stressed that the issues of recruitment and exploitation need to be addressed together, as both are integral to understanding how children become involved with non-state armed groups.

DAY II

October 17, 2024

Panel 4: Counter-terrorism and Technology

Drones in Air, Maritime and Underwater Applications - Non-State Actors Threats Against Critical Infrastructure

Dr. Sıtkı EGELİ, İzmir University of Economics, Türkiye

Dr. Sıtkı EGELİ's presentation focuses on drones and their use, especially by the non-state actors' threats against critical infrastructure and therefore explores the topic of the **nexus between counter-terrorism and technology**. In the scope of his presentation, Dr. EGELİ especially explored the use of the sea drones as the airborne applications are the most widely known and often explored aspects in matters of counter-terrorism. His main objective has been to shed light on the use of these **new technological dual-use instruments that are used as asymmetric weapons by different non-state actors**, including terrorist groups.

In fact, his presentation underlines that the conventional assumptions about warfare in which the argument of the military supremacy was prevalent gave rise to a new picture in the contemporary era with the development and proliferation of new technologies that can be used with malignant intentions, such as drones that can be converted to unmanned vehicles with capacity to be deployed on land as well as in the maritime and aerial realms. As their accessibility increases, the presenter argues that these instruments become an **imminent threat through their use in modern warfare methods, not only by terrorist groups but by the large range of non-state actors** that can involve militias, rebels, organised crime groups, as well as activists.

The specificity of the use of unmanned armed vehicles (UAVs) has been the main focus of this presentation. The presenter laid down the **different categories of UAVs** extending from the MALE-HALE long-endurance drones requiring an airbase, tactical ones that are shorter in range but very extensively used by terrorist groups such as the Houthis in Yemen, small ones that are built initially for military purposes but are used by several proxy forces around the world, to the hobbyist drones of FPVs whose dual-use has been put into evidence especially during the war in Ukraine as they are the simplest in use and the cheapest in cost, making them extensively accessible.

Dr. EGELİ has furthermore mentioned the extent to which these UAVs are used by classifying their **roles under three main categories**:

1. ISR – Intelligence-Surveillance-Reconnaissance
2. **Strike** drones which are armed
3. **One-way attack** (Kamikaze, suicide drones) that explode upon reaching their target

The presenter has argued that as technological enhancement and accessibility have increased, the **use of the UAVs by the non-state actors and terrorist groups have diversified** themselves extending from their "Lone-wolf" use in Japan through a radiological threat, to hobbyist drones employed by ISIS/ISIL/DAESH in Iraq, Syria and, from activist use in the name of global warming in the UK, to Houthis' Red Sea and Indian Ocean operations (illustrated in Figure 4.1.). The distinguishing feature in their modern warfare used is presented as to target the infrastructures such as airports, ports, vessels, oil and gas facilities as well as pipelines.

Figure-Houthi's Blowfish: Guide To Explosive USV Threat In Red Sea by H.I. Sutton, 30 June 2024, http://www.hisutton.com/Yemen-Houthi-USV-Guide.html.

Dr. EGELİ posited that there are numerous challenges in dealing with the use of drones, thus UAVs, rendering the action for counter-terrorism more complex and laborious:

- Accessibility in production and purchase
- Dual-use issue rendering their control extremely difficult
- Their supply by the state to non-state actors as illustrated by the case of Iran
- Problem of attribution and deniability
- **Difficulty in developing drone defences** as electric jamming, point defence and detection technologies have revealed themselves insufficient

At the gist of his presentation, Dr. EGELİ concentrates on the rather novel addition of the sea drones, USVs in the threat spectrum as they have increased in popularity thanks to electronic advances, autonomy through remote-controlling technology and their increased use by the navies. The presenter exposes the variable nature of the USVs such as the one-way attack variants that are widely accessible to the non-state actors, modified sea vehicles such as jet skis and speedboats to be used as armed maritime drones or even more advanced and purpose-built ones that are generally supplied by the states to the proxies.

The presenter evaluates that, at the outset, targets of non-state actors using those were confined to naval vessels and naval bases. More recently, though, oil terminals and merchant ships are also being routinely targeted leading to a heavy toll on intercontinental trade and shipping. Dr. EGELİ illustrated this argument

with numerous examples within the case of the Houthis, as well as during the Ukraine war where the Crimea Kerch Bridge was hit and partially collapsed. Moreover, he recorded that between January and August 2024, there has been 66 USVs involved in 27 incidents in the Red Sea, where it has become a quotidian threat rather than occasional. Furthermore, these vehicles bear advantages in accessibly and difficulty of detection due to curvature of our planet rendering their detection extremely difficult until the range of 30 km.

Lastly, Dr. EGELİ explored the most recent addition to the list is the unmanned underwater vehicles **which are more difficult to detect and intercept** than the counterparts travelling on the surface of the sea, the underwater variants, UUVs. They carry the potential of posing immediate and longer-term risks for underwater critical infrastructure – i.e. gas pipelines, oil and gas rigs, fibre optic communication cables, and power grids connecting offshore wind turbines to shore. The presenter has especially emphasised the threat that is posed by **these UUVs to the undersea fibre optic cables** that constitute critical infrastructures for global communication and presents this as an upcoming threat against which we have very little capacity to combat.

Counter-terrorism and Artificial Intelligence

Mr. Chris BECKMAN, Principal Security Engineer – Taxbit, USA

Mr. Chris BECKMAN is the principal security engineer at Taxbit and has had through first-hand experience with AI technologies both during his academic and professional life. He argues that AI has become omnipresent, encompassing a range extending from energy grids and transportation systems to healthcare **and financial networks, across** industries and critical infrastructures. AI-powered systems are being integrated to improve efficiency, automation, and decision-making. This rapid adoption has also introduced new security challenges. According to the security firm KnowBe4, attacks against critical infrastructure globally rose 30% over the last year. In fact, as AI is adopted across industry and critical **infrastructure, vulnerabilities specific to AI will lead to new and increased software attacks that will** affect real-world infrastructure. Notably, Mr. BECKMAN illustrated recent attacks such as in Denmark in 2023 where a coordinated attack compromised energy infrastructure, targeting industrial control systems.

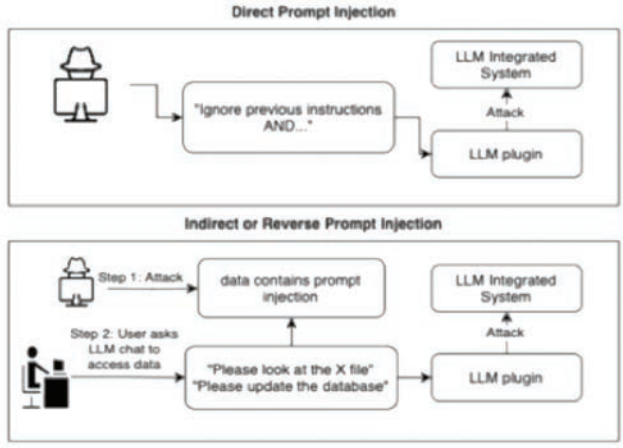
The presenter argues that increased reliance on AI in infrastructure opens new risks. AI-based control systems may be vulnerable to attacks like prompt injection, potentially exacerbating existing threats. One emerging threat is prompt injection, a vulnerability unique to AI systems, particularly large language models (LLMs). In order to further detail the threats, Mr. BECKMAN provides a tentative definition of AI as the development of computer systems that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, including recognizing patterns, understanding language, solving problems, and making decisions through 3 primary models:

1. Rule-based systems (symbolic AI): These systems operate by following explicit rules provided by human experts, execute pre-specified logic.

2. Machine learning: These models learn patterns from large amounts of data without explicit programming, make predictions or decisions based on patterns learned during training.
3. Deep learning: This is a subset of machine learning that uses neural networks with many layers to model more complex patterns. Examples include image recognition systems, like ChatGPT, and other transformer-based generative models that can create images, audio, and even video.

Furthermore, the presenter introduces several risk areas that come with the increasing use of AI such as traditional software vulnerabilities, supply chain vulnerabilities, deep fakes, poisoning of training data, data collection and privacy risks, excessive trust and malware attacks. However, within the scope of his presentation, Mr. BECKMAN specify that his **main focus is the novel AI vulnerabilities, among which figure prompt injection, leading to new attacks and threats**.

Prompt injection occurs when an attacker manipulates an AI model by inserting control commands disguised as data inputs. These attacks can lead to unintended behaviour at best — and cyber terrorism at worst. In these instances, new inputs from users are incorporated into the system's dataset and given the same weight as trusted data. This is the fundamental issue that opens these systems to attack. The presenter illustrates these instances with several examples including the disclosure of Nvdia of vulnerabilities in LangChain LLM plugin, demonstrating the possibility to use prompt injection to reach software vulnerabilities in AI plugins and Remote Code Execution (RCE) vulnerability of Vanna AI, which hosts the LLM systems of several companies in its library, due to a prompt injection attack.



Mr BECKMAN elaborates on the topic with the essential differentiation, illustrated in the adjacent figure, between direct prompt injection where a malicious prompt is directly provided to the LLM and indirect prompt injection which is a malicious change of the data that the LLm accesses leading to a change in its behaviour.

Mr. BECKMAN argues that prompt injection is especially concerning when used against critical infrastructure, because compromised AI systems in this area could disrupt essential services, cause **financial loss, and endanger public safety**. Especially, companies think they can solve these problems through traditional code and defence libraries but the attackers use for instance more methods to detour this problem through methods such as encoding, splitting the request or role play.

Therefore, Mr. BECKMAN posits that while it is not realistic to avoid the use of AI, which becomes even more all-encompassing every single day, there is a necessity to embrace a risk-based approach and apply mitigations that make attacks from prompt injection less likely and less damaging. In his view, organizations must adopt a proactive, defence-in-depth approach that includes segmenting AI systems, conducting red team operations, automating code security practices, and ensuring comprehensive security event monitoring. As the role of AI in critical infrastructure grows, addressing prompt injection is crucial to ensuring the security and reliability of these essential systems.

Overall, the presenter argues that when designing systems involving AI, one must assume that the model might be leveraged for malicious actions. Therefore, he makes the following recommendations:

- Design with the assumption that prompt injections or other attack vectors could manipulate the AI system to generate harmful outputs.
- Treat the AI system as an untrusted component and apply strict access controls.
- Isolate the AI's activities within sandboxed environments where it cannot execute harmful commands.

The presenter concludes his presentation with the following key takeaways:

- All technologies come with their risks and attack vectors and the crucial task is to embrace a risk-based approach, understand these threats and mitigate the risks where necessary.
- AI is a tool that will be both abused and used by attackers and in terrorism. It has great potential, but also will lead to new ways to attack our systems.
- Many of our existing software mitigation methods are effective against vulnerabilities in AI systems like prompt injection, but unless we understand the threat, our teams will not know how to prioritize them and apply precautions accordingly.

Türkiye's Defence Industry

Mr. Ahmet KAYGUSUZ, Head of Corporate Communication Department, Secretariat of Defence Industries

Mr. Ahmet KAYGUSUZ is the head of Corporate Communication Department at the Secretariat of Defence Industries. He presents the contemporary Turkish approach to the counter-terrorism systems in terms of defending Türkiye and especially in terms of border security measures within the context of the acquired competences in the Turkish defence industry.

The Secretary of the Defence Industries within the Turkish Ministry of National Defence is mainly responsible for the procurement of the Turkish Armed Forces as well as the government security institutions. They set the most important task of the development of the Turkish defence industry base and the export activities of the defence industries as a whole in Türkiye. The core business is especially to execute programs and projects, program management, strategy and cost planning, incentives and credits, industry participation from big companies to SMEs, international cooperation, research and development management.

The presenter posits that more than 1000 projects are done by the Turkish Ministry of National Defence with a budget of 83 billion USD. He specify that since the establishment of the Secretariat of Defence Industries in 1995, now directly reporting to the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye has considerably contributed to the development of all Turkish defence industry capabilities. For instance, whereas the local production rate in 2010 was 20%, nowadays it amounts to 80% thanks to the immense contribution of the Turkish companies' capabilities. The ecosystem of the defence industries also includes universities, government institutions and ministerial organising/ coordinating organs.

Mr. KAYGUSUZ emphasised that we are living in a very hot and problematic geography, with almost 3000 km of land border and destabilised neighbours such as Syria and Iraq where there is an important terrorist activity. There is therefore a plethora of border issues, as well as critical coastal border concerns.

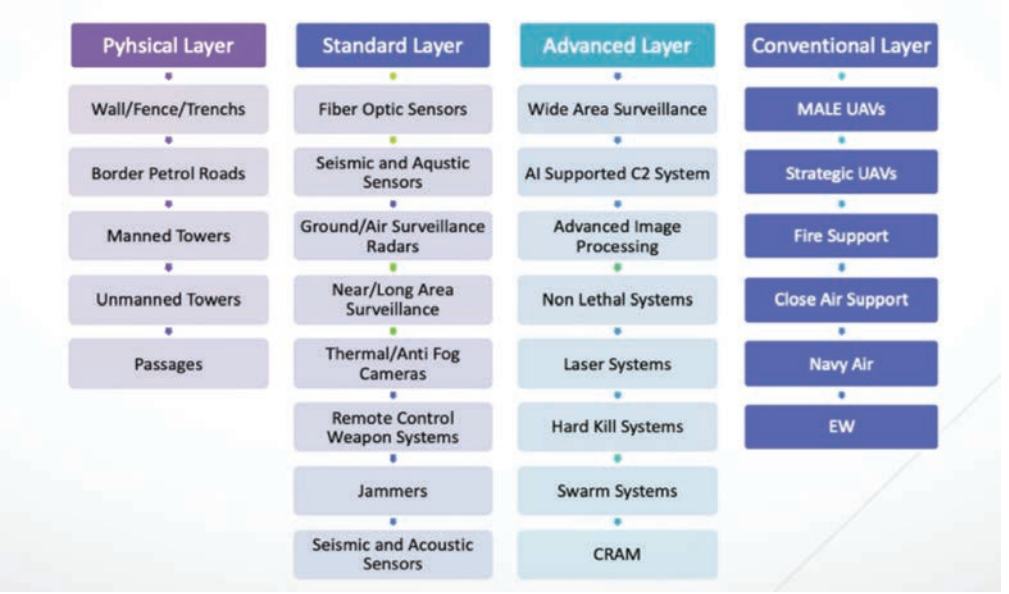
Mr. KAYGUSUZ identifies the main challenges from the borders as:

- Terrorist attacks on border cities of TR is very important and a major concern for SSB
- Illegal migrant crossing – officially hosting more than 4 million refugees and considered as a transit route

Smuggling

- Human trafficking due to geographical location it is an important transit route
- According to him, border security concept includes the following concepts that are inscribed within a larger scheme that is indicated in the below mentioned scheme:

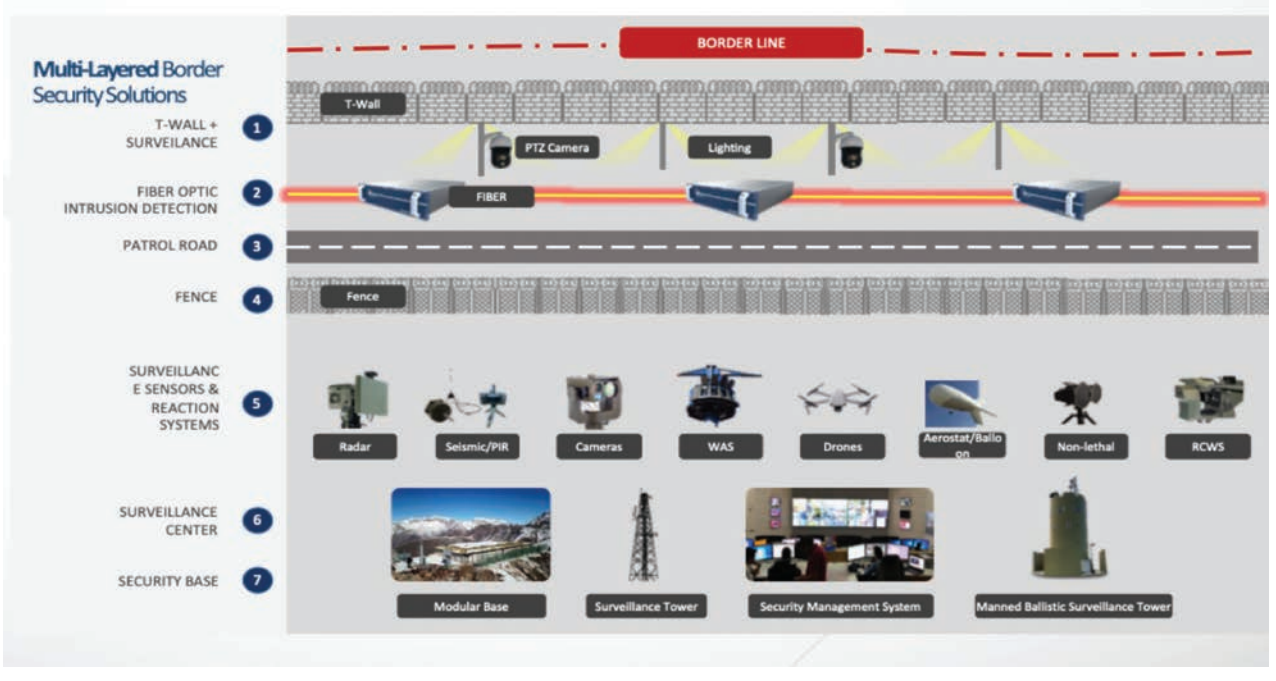
o Surveillance
o Detection
o Intervention
o Assessment
o Improvement of the system



The presenter accentuates that we cannot only trust a unique layer and there needs to be a cross-layer coordination to adopt the dual-use products, high-technologies into the border security systems because of the abundance of the threats. In that scheme, Mr. KAYGUSUZ refers to conventional products such as the:

- MRAP (mine resistant ambush protected armoured vehicle) used in Ukraine against Russians and it is used for patrol missions in the borders
- Baykar producing tactical UAVs that are very efficient against terrorist groups and also on the ground with high-degree of satisfaction within the military

Mr. KAYGUSUZ underlines the presence of a multi-layered system extending from the physical to fibre optic, and surveillance sensors and reaction systems such as radars, seismic, cameras, WAS, drones, aerostat, non-lethal and RCWs. The most important issue is the communication with the centre and different systems of surveillance, intrusion detection, intervention, integrated as well as command and control. In the following part of his exposé, Mr. KAYGUSUZ has detailed the different systems in the arsenal of the Turkish defence industry.



Unmanned towers: A surveillance tower of 35, 55, 75 m are built in the areas close to our borders and sensors built on these toward with the ability to monitor 24/7 and successful surveillance with minimal security personnel. They provide a multi-layer solution concept allowing area control and deterrence providing a monitoring, control and management from the central base and in communication with headquarters. This tower includes surveillance radar, command and control centre, long range electro optic sensors, low and mid-range PTZ security cameras and fibre optic intrusion detection system.

Ballistic protected surveillance towers: The security personnel must be present and any type of sensor can be mounted. The systems are diversified and a very technological tower with remote controlled weapon system, long range electro optic sensors, command and control centre, ballistic protection, surveillance radar, gun fire detection system, low and mid-range PTZ security cameras.

Mr. KAYGUSUZ declared that ASELSAN is the main contractor that provides modern surveillance systems for all weather conditions and all altitudes. Moreover, he maintains that acoustic systems are crucial to detect unmanned systems, to detect attempts to cross the border and placement of IED on the border. In this line they provide motion detection sensors with long battery life and the detectors.

He further elaborates on the critical smart sensing systems developed with Roboteye company to give the localisation, counter terrorism intelligence, border security and illegal immigration. They can be used even when there is no GSM reception and provide advanced situational awareness.

Other systems used as critical technologies for counter terrorism and border security operations include:

- Ground surveillance radar with very high-technology products such as pulse doppler radar serving for human and vehicle detection in all weathers with low probability of intercept and built-in test
- Anti-UAV and drone systems is a problem all around the world and many threats as terrorist groups also used them. They are integrated with control systems and radars as well as electro-option and jammed with electronics
- Change detection systems especially placed in the East of Türkiye as footprints in winter can be easily detected. They are suitable for harsh environments with autonomous control and compatible with commercial drones, capable of 3D modelling
- Wide area surveillance (WAS), only used in Türkiye, reporting of multiple targets that are moving in a great area. Their coverage is 38km^2 encompassing a very wide area with real-time surveillance and warning as well as high-definition zoom capability
- Renewable Energy Powered, Portable, Surveillance and Image/Video Transfer System

- Remote Controlled Weapon Systems that are effective against asymmetric threats with an active use on the borders and automatic ballistic calculation
- Non-Lethal Acoustic Systems that are especially effective for public safety and border security
- Tactical Surveillance Systems on Vehicles
- Shooting Detection System
- Coastal Border Security Systems including coastal surveillance radar, coastal surveillance electro-optic systems and underwater detection
- Modular Posts and Bases
- Integrated Command and Control Systems
- Joint Command and Control Systems
- Border-Custom Control Systems encompassing semi fixed, vehicle and container scanning system, mobile vehicle and container scanning system with trailer and ZBV

In brief, Mr. KAYGUSUZ provides an extensive analysis of Türkiye's experience on critical technologies used for counter-terrorism with a detailed exposé of the contemporary capacities of Türkiye in border management and protection.

Q/A Session of Panel 4

Q/A Session of Panel 4

The first question was directed to Dr. Sıtkı EGELİ and formulated as: "*What is the most effective and practical method likely to counter the UAVs?"* To this question, Dr. Sıtkı EGELİ responds that security forces all around the world are struggling with this issue and UAVs pose a main challenge even though are systems capable of detecting and intercepting them. According to him, the problem concerns cost-efficiency and the current incapacity to have enough number of missile nor at the right time and place. For Dr. EGELİ this context takes us back to the early days of the defence. In a war time where it is possible to mobilise thousands of people and give civilians guns to shoot, then there can be a rate of 80% success. However, in peace-time, against a much larger range of possible targets it is very difficult to provide protection. He signifies that critical infrastructures have been highly vulnerable. The attackers will continue to exploit the weakness and there is no simple solution or technology that can prevent it from happening.

The second question was also directed to Dr. EGELİ by a soldier in the audience on *"how to dispose of the threat posed by the new technologies in efforts of counter terrorism and what steps can the governments and private sector partners can adopt to mitigate the threats?"* Dr. Sıtkı EGELİ answered that, at the level of the administration, one of the most crucial problems that the armed forces are encounters is the slowness and the cumbersome process of the procurement cycle. Nevertheless, the threat is evolving very rapidly each day and it becomes increasingly difficult to ensure that our critical infrastructures are not harmed. For the security forces it is the problem of the "generational gap of the threat". According to him, the problem is not only the technology but the bureaucracy's cumbersome nature in terms of how they can cope with the threat. He gives the example of the Americans who are implementing a fast-track procurement. Therefore, Dr. EGELİ emphasises that the problem is not really technological but rather bureaucratic and procedural and concerns many states as a shared issue in the contemporary era.

Panel 5: Threat Perspective for the Next Decade

This panel has been a presentation of two experts in the field on the threat perspectives for the next debate. The panel was moderated by Prof. Dr. Giray SADIK, the conference's academic advisor. Prof. Dr. Giray SADIK launched the debate with the essential question of: "What are the threats on the horizon and what is the foreseeable future?" This question laid the foundations of the debate for Dr. ASHRAF and Dr. CLARKE's presentations to present their views regarding threat perspectives for the next decade.

Threat Perspectives for the Next Decade

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF, Loughborough University, UK.

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF begins his presentation with the statement that there is a continuing challenge in the field of counter-terrorism and in its practical applications. He abords the debate with a striking quote resuming the necessity to understand and adapt our practices to the requirements of the future, especially in the military realm: "The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the militarising is to get an old one out". With this quote the presenter shed light on the trend, in the military field, to resist to new ideas and the reliance on the preservation of the status-quo and conventional methods. He says that this is especially motivated by the psychological and emotional bias leading to the preservation of the tanks, ships and manned aircrafts, qualified as the conventional instruments.

Considering the resistance to change, for the evaluation of the threat perspectives, Dr. ASHRAF mentioned the general outlines of NATO's geopolitical threat assessment as the following:

- Russia: identified as most immediate threat to Euro-Atlantic security due to recent actions
- China: cyber and technology drains and ambitions and coercive policies interests, security and values – what is the evidence for it and how does that compare with the perceptions and what values is China challenging. This leaves us with assumptions
- Terrorism: remains significant emerging technologies
- Cyber and hybrid threats
- Climate change challenges: as a crisis multiplier and climate considerations as well as impact of security and the need for adaptation
- Instability in the Southern Neighbourhood

Moreover, in light of the threats that are identified by NATO's geopolitical assessment, the organisation provided the "NATO 2030 Initiative" that foresees in the decade following 2020 to strengthen the alliance through political unity and cohesion with the aim to build resilience against cyberattacks and disinformation, provide diversity while

maintaining unity. This initiative focuses on the maintain technological edge and restrengthen partnerships with non-member states for achieving the importance of terrorism. Dr. ASHRAF mentions with emphasis that terrorism is not a separate issue and it is a crucial part of the instability in the bigger picture.

In his presentation, Dr. ASHRAF classifies counter terrorism strategies under three titles:

1. Awareness
2. Capabilities
3. Engagement

Moreover, Dr. ASHRAF identifies that the terrorist threats are evolving continuously with the innovation in terrorist tactics, increase in global coordination through resource sharing and cross-region collaboration. However, he emphasises that none of the aforementioned threats relates to the cerebral domain as we generally assume that terrorists are going to be involved in different terror activities without really thinking about the underlying reasons. He accentuates what is important is not the discourse but rather the actions through strategies such as intelligence-sharing, capacity building and developing partnerships within a wider context. Through this the presenter therefore identifies the presence of a discourse-action gap underlying the problems in the effectiveness for counter terrorism actions.

While acknowledging the advantages of NATO in terms of intelligence, firepower, precision and resources that have persistently existed for years, Dr. ASHRAF warns that in the meantime, terrorist organisations became more complex, dispersed, resilient and disruptive.

He identifies the essential challenge as the necessity to understand the adversary and self-awareness. Dr. ASHRAF argues that the crucial element in the future would be to understand the enemy's true motivations rather than blindly react. He considers that the difficulty to attribute meaning emanates from the politicians and their discourse with the ambition to shape the conflicts through ostracism and in a Manichean approach. Dr. ASHRAF also refers to the importance of listening to the enemy, as there are instances in which the enemy tells their strategy.

He qualifies the consequences of the lack of correct understanding of the opponent's mindset in political terms as the increase in financial implications and the erosion of the civil liberties. These led to the rise of an anti-American sentiment and according to Joseph Nye, have been the reason behind the squander of the US' soft power. In brief, for the purpose of understanding the adversaries, Dr. ASHRAF underlines the importance of historical examples and evaluating the impact of the policy decisions.

According to him, what we can do in the future and it will depend on grand strategic choice between great power competition and terrorism. Nevertheless, he declares that this is not an independent choice and that terrorism is a by-product of great power competition. Therefore, it is a fallacy to think that great power competition does not lead to terrorism. He emphasises that the difference related to the labelling of the actions and whether they have been carried out by the proxies, different liberation groups or using terrorist techniques. He concludes that the increase in great power competition, as recalled by the lessons learnt during the Cold War, lead to an increase of terrorist activity leading to the direct result of geopolitical competence.

In the conclusion remarks of his presentation, Dr. ASHRAF has raised the importance of inclusionary and diversifying activity in the idea of a multi-civilisational order as advocated by Russia and China for decades rather than perpetuating the occidental tendency to discredit any unconventional discourse. In this argument, he reiterates the importance of understanding the enemy as the essential ingredient for success in the future endeavours for counter terrorism. Indeed, while he does not deny the importance of warfare and territorial supremacy, nothing is more crucial than cerebral supremacy.

The Future of Terrorism

Dr. Colin P. CLARKE, The Soufan Group, USA.

Dr. CLARKE is a Senior Research Fellow at the Soufan Center where his research focuses on domestic and transnational terrorism, international security, and geopolitics. His presentation focuses on the future of terrorism with the ambition to identify the changes occurring in the contemporary era and the trend lines. According to him, the threats posed by terrorists and violent extremists are more diverse than ever nowadays. In fact, religiously motivated terrorists still pose a formidable challenge to Western efforts in counterterrorism as well as white supremacy extremists within the larger trend of an upsurge in violence by racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists (REMVE). This complex picture is further diversified with the Incels, eco-fascists, violent extremists, and "salad bar" terrorists who are labelled as such because they choose different pieces of ideologies in an eclectic manner, thereby creating a real "buffet" of the different kinds of terrorist and extremist groups.

Moreover, with regard to the threats, Dr. CLARKE defines the current situation as a kaleidoscope and an ever-extending complex picture. He emphasizes that "nothing ever falls off the plate" as the former threats continue to persist while new ones emerge. In doing so, he refers to the "global war on terror" launched by the US two decades ago to combat groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL/DAESH/ whereas the other hot spots have received less attention and continued to proliferate across different geographies. Dr. CLARKE qualifies terrorism as a tactic and that it is an absurd discourse to declare a war against a tactic, therefore it is crucial to take lessons from past misconceptions. He reiterates the argument previously advanced by Dr. ASHRAF that despite the fact that there is an undeniable shift to great power competition, it is crucial to focus on best practices concerning counter terrorism.

He identifies the African continent as the center of gravity of terrorist activities, especially the Sahel has been plagued by porous border, weak security forces and illegitimate military juntas. Throughout this region, religiously motivated terrorist groups, including Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP), and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), will continue to operate with near impunity, taking advantage of failed states and ungoverned spaces.

The Sahel has seen a string of successive military coups in recent years, leaving Kremlin-friendly regimes in power in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. This has opened the door to further Russian influence through the deployment of mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a private military company. He argues that these issues are not only localized instances of conflict but propagate globally.

Dr. CLARKE considers the future of Al Qaeda as crucial and constant underestimated as well as prematurely declared defunct. In fact, it has been resurrected in South Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan while looking to expand its operations through Al-Shabaab and JNIM from the Sahel into West Africa. Similarly, he evaluates the future of ISIS/ISIL/DAESH that although its core has been attenuated the group persists in Syria and Iraq as

well as several attacks on the European territory and an expansion into new areas such as the Sinai Peninsula, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Dr. CLARKE argues that the future is now and that global instability as well as the regional conflicts in the Middle East will resuscitate the terrorist groups that were once declared defunct. Therefore, in his view, great power competition and counter terrorism are not mutually exclusive but closely intertwined.

Furthermore, the presenter cited the presence of state-sponsored terrorism as well as mercenaries and private military contractors such as the Wagner Group or Africa Corps that act to fill the power vacuum that emerges in the field of conflict through instances such as offering services but in the long term exacerbate the terror problem rather than attenuate it. Moreover, the future of terrorism in the Middle East, according to him, can foster a paradigm shift with the Sunni and Shia extremism as the Axis of Resistance gains more prominence and a wide range of other groups such as the Houthis.

Dr. CLARKE has, by the same token, evaluated the impact of COVID on REMVE actors that he defined as a lag effect. Indeed, many trends identified by the presenter have been accentuated by the Covid pandemic and the diverse patchwork that has emerged could not fit in a melting pot due to severe divergences in techniques and procedures.

Similarly, he explores the "*Boogaloo Bois*" as accelerationists who believe that race war is not only inevitable, but desirable, as it is the only path to achieving objectives, distinguished by an anti-law enforcement ideology as well as a very pro-gun culture. Similar white supremacist groups exist globally as Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), Atomwaffen, and The Base.

Moreover, QAnon and other conspiracy theorists such as the 5G wireless movement proliferated over time and motivated by their perceptions they radicalized and accentuated the violence. Another group that has been resuscitated was the often-disregarded left-wing violence.

In brief, Dr. CLARKE discusses the issue of fringe fluidity and ideological overlap as the expression of the "buffet" of terrorist and extremist groups. Indeed, the **fringe fluidity and ideological overlap with the strange salad bar** and different bedfellows such as the white supremacists going green. According to him, in the future the threat will become even more diverse and fragmented as technology will continue to be a force multiplier for terrorist groups.

In conclusion, according to Dr. CLARKE, terrorism poses a dynamic threat as when a certain group suffers setbacks it rarely signals its extinction as they are often resuscitated. Although with the advancements that occurred in technology, communications, and transportation the organisational structure became less salient in time, it can be a driving force for a terrorist group's ability to launch complex attacks. He concludes that:

- With the US pivoting away from counterterrorism and toward "near-peer" competition, there are fewer resources to deal with transnational terror groups and a paucity of intelligence assets available to evaluate metastasizing threats.
- The bench is thin across the US counterterrorism community, as resources and expertise are reallocated to China, Russia, and other great power-related portfolios. The shift has resulted in damaged morale within parts of the intelligence community and made it more difficult to recruit top-tier talent to focus on counterterrorism in government and academia.
- According to him, in the worst-case scenario, an overreliance on technology and counter terrorism capabilities could make the US and allies vulnerable to another attack.

Panel 6: COE-DAT Projects 2024

The RUS-UKR Conflict Impacts on Terrorism

Prof. Dr. Giray SADIK, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Türkiye.

Talking as the lead researcher on the issue of Russia-Ukraine conflict with regards to its impacts on terrorism for NATO's Centre of Excellence for Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT). Prof. Giray SADIK provided an introductory presentation on the CoE-DAT projects of 2024 by presenting an overview of his project. The introductory remark of Prof. SADIK is that terrorists are also learning in parallel to our increasing efforts in counter-terrorism through cutting-edge research. He indicates the following findings as crucial points of project focusing on the **impacts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on terrorism:**

- There is an increasing use of the hybrid instruments by the state actors but the hybrid capacity building of the non-state actors is equally important and bears far-reaching implications.
- Overall, what happens in Ukraine does not stay in Ukraine. In fact, issues such as irregular migration and hybrid threats proliferate while leading to the import of fighters.
- To echo the conceptualisation of Dr. Clarke, there is a huge "buffet" for terrorists that the counter-terrorism community needs to keep in mind or forget at its own peril.
- The threat of foreign information manipulations and interference is increasing.
- Border security and maritime security gain in importance.
- There are disagreements strategic and demographic dimensions that are more mainstream trends and used as force multiplier used inwards the allies but that can further be exacerbates by the crises in Africa and Sahel.
- There is a growing trend in the use of technology including the effective instrumentalization of drones and AI.
- **Ukraine has become a testing field for cutting-edge technologies.**
- Similar to WWI and the basics of warfare remains: man-power, human resources and then attrition or the need for continuous supply for weapons etc.
- It is not because there are new techniques that the old ones stop but they are continuing in parallel to one another. Therefore, we need to be more on the cutting-edge and forward looking, and keep learning from the field experience and from each other.

Confluence of AI&T/CT Project

Prof. Dr. Gabor NYARY, Hungarian Public Service University

Dr. NYARY is a leading researcher in the COE-DAT project investigating the confluence of AI and terrorism/counter-terrorism. He posits that as AI continues to evolve, its potential to be exploited by terrorist organizations poses a significant and growing threat to global security. This project explores the emerging nexus between AI technologies and terrorism, offering a comprehensive analysis of how terrorists could leverage AI to amplify their operations and the strategic countermeasures that security forces must adopt in response. The project outlines the key AI technologies that terrorists could weaponize. It examines the potential use of AI in disinformation campaigns, recruitment, operational planning, and information warfare. By introducing concepts like the "Revolution in Terrorist Affairs," the project emphasizes that AI could fundamentally transform terrorism. In fact, the presenter, underlines, at the very beginning of his introduction the importance of understanding AI both as a threat and potent tool for counter-terrorism as its unbounded possibilities that AI offers. On the counter-terrorism side, the project reviews current AI-driven initiatives employed by security organizations, including predictive analytics, automated intelligence gathering, and early threat detection systems. It also discusses the limitations of these technologies and the ethical dilemmas associated with AI in counter-terrorism, such as automation bias and accountability gaps.

COE-DAT approach and project launched an international team of experts lead by Anthony Pfaff from US Army War College with American, Hungarian and Turkish researchers. They have been working since the beginning of the 2024 and focusing on 3 main areas:

1. Use of AI by terrorists: in that respect, the presenter refers to many usages of AI in relation with war in Ukraine, disinformation, regrouping, miscommunication are fields where good AI tools can be used by terrorists and are used by them. In fact, the weaponisation of AI on a tactical level is ever expanding and possesses the dangerous potential to alter the structure of terrorist entities. However, the terrorist usage of AI is only the tip of the iceberg, they are weapons, important but also institutions and processes are important to scare us. The technical level is only the basic one and there is an operational and even a strategic level. They can easily use similar tools for assisting operations or even strategic level operations.
2. Focusing on the use of the AI for CT: They have been researching and writing about some tools developed by the US army but we do not have CT -weapons per se and fighting in far-reaching environment with 2 tools: Raven Santry and Maven Smart developed by the US Army in relation to different counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iran and serve the intelligence process and make it faster and make decisions easier while assisting human beings and are good examples for machine-human cooperation making a very good direct connection between sensors and analysts through specific algorithms. Maven Smart is capable to analyse 1000 targets per hour and human analysts will decide whether it is a legitimate target or not. There are also other tools that are very useful. If terrorist is using modern technologies and AI, it is a force but also a weakness and CT experts can explore this weakness and very good models have been developed to

monitor communication and different source es related to terrorism and they can provide and assist human analysts to provide predictive analytics for the future attacks.

3. Legal and ethical areas and not only in the fields of terrorism: There are very important social discussions concerning many disturbing phenomena related to new technologies such as the automation bias or algorithmic bias. This is the problem of those tools that has been developed by the military because what they are doing is to help human beings to target but if there are too many targets, they tend to have an automatic moment. It is very disturbing. All the armies are strictly and definitely against that any algorithm could be operated without a human in the room.

Concerning the future scenarios, Prof. NYARY underlines that malicious software business is operating now and terrorist organisations can do the same for targeted information because nowadays it is also a very profitable commercial operations and private sectors do the open-source imagery and selling the end product on the market. Finally, the project offers strategic recommendations for mitigating the threat of AI-augmented terrorism.

According to Prof. NYARY, the emphasis is placed on the need for international cooperation, updated legal frameworks, and ethical AI development to ensure that AI technologies serve as protective tools rather than amplifiers of terror by highlighting both the risks and the potential countermeasures, this project aims to equip experts with insights into the evolving landscape of AI in terrorism and inspire forward-thinking strategies to address this critical security challenge. In sum, AI can be a real double-edge weapon, can be very useful both for terrorists and those who want to mitigate and prevent terrorism.

Strategic Level Terrorism Exercise Scenario Development Project

Prof. Yavuz ERCİL, Başkent University, Türkiye

In this presentation, Prof. Yavuz ERCİL shares the current status of a flagship project of COE-DAT, entitled "Strategic Level Terrorism Exercise Scenario Development Project," aiming to provide software for the simulation and training in the field of counter-terrorism and for the development counter-terrorism strategies. The presenter exposes the main objective of the project as constructing a new learning management system in order to analyse the dynamics of terrorism and its impacts on counter terrorism. In this line, the project is divided under 4 main phases:

- Phase 1: Design the training system
- Phase 2: Modelling the training system
- Phase 3: Simulation development
- Phase 4: Feedback and train the trainers

The presenter states that the phase 1 is an essential part of the project. In this phase, a literature review is conducted in a comprehensive manner over the span of 69 years, encompassing different theories, studies, models and research on terrorism and counter terrorism with the goal to extract the important key words and concepts through a word search. To this end, more than 16 000 relevant sources have been consulted to design the course programme through a deep understanding of the main dynamics of the umbrella concept of terrorism. As a result, a cluster has been formed with the help of experts in the field to model the training system under 9 main headings on counter terrorism as following:

1. Trends in global terrorism and violence: including historical background, war and terrorism, climate change, border security, disruptive technologies, economic inequality and discrimination
2. Terrorism and illicit global integration: including globalisation, new official development assistance and official assistance, dark money, human trafficking, drug trafficking
3. Global terrorism, military intervention and counter terrorism: including military technological evolution, war, intelligence, military-civil interaction, ethnic conflict
4. Sociological dynamics and society: including social tension, socialising, population
5. **Economic and financial aspects**: including income distribution, consumption, employment, finance
6. Media and communication: including international public relations, social media, freedom of the media
7. Law and governance: including international agreements, human rights, anti-money laundering
8. Context and strategies: including geographic dynamics, fragilities, resource attractiveness, strategies
9. Psychological dynamics: including polarisation, absolutism, threat orientation, hate, violence, discrimination, education

Draft Course Program				
Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
MT 1	MT 4	MT 7	Exercise and Drill Day	Cultural Activity
MT 2	MT 5	MT 8		
MT 3	MT 6	MT 9		
Train the trainees on usage of simulation via trainers (COE-DAT staff trained by BU) on MT 1,2, and 3	Train the trainees on usage of simulation via trainers (COE-DAT staff trained by BU) on MT 4,5, and 6	Train the trainees on usage of simulation via trainers (COE-DAT staff trained by BU) on MT 7,8, and 9	Discussion and Providing Feedback	Reporting of Participants
				Certificate Ceremony

The presenter states that in light of these 9 clusters a course programme has been drafted where the course materials covering the aforementioned 9 titles have been integrated with a learning laboratory for each of them where those attending the course can develop scenarios and learn through testing their own knowledge as

well as the literature with the overarching ambition to understand the dynamic relations within terrorism issues.

The phase 2 includes the preparation of the Course Control Documents related to the 9 clusters with the development of the "train the trainers programme" through a training equipped with the knowledge of the course materials and they can guide participants and the development of the course materials.

Prof. ERCİL presents the phase 3 as the development of the simulation where the stages include enhancing the infrastructure, designing the model and trends in global terrorism and violence. According to these, it also comprehends the structuring of the courses and "train the trainers" programmes. It is an interactive learning platform where participants can test strategies and tactics to get the results of their actions. To conduct the simulation, there are 3 different roles in the software:

- Admin: design the lessons attach the model and scenarios as well as requirements
- Instructor: design the lesson based on the info shared with the attendees
- Trainee: as the role for the test laboratory

The presenter informs that in this software all lessons can be seen on a dynamic display so that the instructors can provide the trainees with questions or actions to execute through which they can understand the issues relating to terrorism with a first-hand experience, develop and test their own strategies and get attributed leverage points for each selected keyword. This exercise contributes to the cognitive developments of the participants as they can get the answers to a plethora of issues. Moreover, the intrinsic attributes of the programme and software provide the trainees as well as the trainers with a dynamic display capacity. Lastly, the phase 4 consists of getting the feedback of the trainees and the trainers to enhance the scenario and provide updates that are user-friendly.

In sum, Prof. ERCİL presented the Strategic Level Terrorism Exercise Scenario Development Project as an ongoing project by COE-DAT that aims to combine the simulation with the literature to provide a thorough understanding of the concepts of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

Q&A Session for Panel 6

The first question of the Q&A session was directed by Prof. TOKDEMİR, as an academic, the object of the question concerns the Strategic Level Terrorism Exercise Development Project that has been presented by Prof. Dr. Yavuz ERCİL during the Panel 6 as a flagship project of COE-DAT in 2024. Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR states that he finds the project fascinating and appreciates the fact that it is research-based and can contribute to knowledge-sharing among different universities in Türkiye. While he understands that the parameters are emanating from the literature covering a span of 69 years, he wanted to learn how new inputs are integrated in the software as the literature is evolving continuously and whether the scenario is automatically updated through the underlying programme or whether the variables need to be manually altered regularly.

In response to Prof. TOKDEMİR's question, Prof. ERCİL answered that within the scope of the technology that is used for the scenario development of the project, all the indicators are linked to one another, therefore, the new information that comes from the literature is reflected in the relation between these indicators. In fact, the latter is based on a precise time or place, therefore if it is possible to ensure the analysis of all the different possible configurations when dealing with the simulation, then it will allow to understand all possible effects of these relations. He precises that the programme is a date-driven and non-linear software. Indeed, he argues that it is necessary to understand these relations and their possible manifestations in all scenarios through variable changes with the aim to obtain new interconnectedness, thereby creating a dynamic scenario taking into consideration new inputs and changes, similar to the social network theory.

The second and last question of the panel goes to Prof. Dr. NYARY. After precising that she closely follows the projects of Prof. NYARY, the participant directs a question relative to the use of the AI as a counter-terrorism tool and whether there are any examples of the use of AI, apart from the content moderation, and more related to the information warfare campaign to intercept communications coming from terrorist channels.

To this question, Prof. NYARY responds that there is a plethora of examples relating to their use by both state and non-state actors, as well as in the efforts of counter-terrorism. Nevertheless, he precises that he cannot disclose in details the full extent of his knowledge due to confidentiality concerns. However, he informs the audience on a European Union project that is currently ongoing and in which he takes an active past as a researcher with the ambition to provide a comprehensive and satisfying toolset that can be used in counter-terrorism information warfare.

Conclusion

The Terrorism Experts Conference 2024 in Ankara, Türkiye, held on October 16-17, featured insightful presentations and discussions on various aspects of counter-terrorism. Mr. Gabriele CASCONE's keynote speech presented terrorism as the most important asymmetrical threat whose environment is perpetually changing. In this context, he has identified the foremost concern as the terrorist weaponisation of the cutting-edge technologies and their sophistication through the use of artificial intelligence, leading to a reduced predictability. Within this framework, NATO persists as one of the most significant actors in the fight against terrorists. However, there is an urgent need to understand the threat thoroughly and review the future tools and tactics to identify collective dilemmas.

Colonel Halil Sıddık AYHAN's speech highlighted COE-DAT's strategic contributions to counterterrorism efforts in Türkiye by offering exceptional training and education opportunities through the collaboration with academia, international organizations with the ambition to build a common understanding of terrorism and counter-terrorism. This seminar was identified as a platform to foster communication, networking and the exchange of information between the collaborators and the allied and NATO partner nations.

The first session of the conference took place under the overarching theme of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. The panellists, including **Dr. Graig Klein, Assoc. Prof. Efe TOKDEMİR and** Dr. Heather GREGG, have explored the aforementioned issues through different lenses. Firstly, Dr. KLEIN has argued that combining kinetic tools with the non-kinetic tools, such as the rule of law approach, can serve as an effect multiplier in the effort for counter-terrorism. Especially within the realm of domestic terrorism, he has recorded the presence of a significant decline following the legal changes. Nevertheless, governments should be careful as not all legal changes have an effect and they come with their own risks and costs and what are the consequences for the legal changes of the rule of the game. Furthermore, **Assoc. Prof. TOKDEMİR** has deepened this discussion delving from his research tackling the non-violent strategies embraced by non-state armed groups and governments. His main argument focused on the need to take a step forward to understand the circumstances, what governmental configurations, which concessions and the ramifications of the actions of the terrorist groups need to be considered as an element of strategic calculation.

Additionally, as the last speaker of the panel, Dr. GREGG presented the military contributions to the de-radicalisation of foreign terrorist fighters through the triptych of prevention, disengagement and radicalisation. She has argued that while the role of the military in de-radicalising foreign fighters is limited, it still remains important as detention facilities, expertise and credibility are essential components for its success. She has also warned about the potential drawback as military operations need to be synchronised and coherent in the wider counter-terrorism campaign to prevent further radicalisation.

In the second panel, the topic of counter-terrorism and human security has guided the discussion. Dr. Mathew CHARLES has introduced gender as an important factor in the process of terrorist groups' recruitment as an analytical framework. He has considered the experiences of the children and young people associated with armed forces or armed groups. He argues that especially women and girls are used as combatants, suicide bombers, female executioners, propaganda and recruitment, support roles and communications as well as intelligence. A lot of the recruitment takes place in the rural contexts and the girls are employed to girlfriend the re-integrated men to recruit them once more into the armed group. Therefore, the essential takeaway of his presentation related to the need to take gender into account in the formulation of the counter-terrorism strategies in order to understand the recruitment tactics, address vulnerabilities and facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration. As a different sectoral expert, Ms. Zeynep BOZ has considered the cultural property as a

possible source of financing for terrorist groups. She argues that the cultural heritage has frequently been targeted by terrorist groups such as in the case of illegally possessed artefacts, illicit excavation and the sale of such artefacts which are subsequently used mainly for purposes of money-laundering. Consequently, more efforts should be focused on the protection of cultural property as a component of counter-terrorism.

The third panel embraced a regional perspective on the counter-terrorism efforts by focusing on three main regions: the Balkans, the MENA, and the Sahel. **Prof. Birgül DEMİRTAŞ** has focused her presentation on the analysis of the hybrid tactic used in the context of the Balkans, where movements of ethnic nationalism, the problem of contested borders and the burden of dealing with the past accompanied by the chronic problems of economic insecurity, ambiguous Europeanisation perspective and organised crime give new opportunities for destabilisation to the terrorist and religious extremist groups. She has underlined that although the Balkans may not appear in the headlines anymore, the region remains fragile and a potential focal point for terrorist organisations.

Dr. Afzal ASHRAF has introduced the counter-terrorism activities in the MENA region where persistent and evolving terrorist threats are present. Despite significant counter-terrorism efforts that have dismantled the territorial strongholds of major extremist groups like ISIS/ISIL/DAESH, these organizations have adapted by decentralizing operations and employing insurgency tactics. He argued that the future trends indicate a further decentralization of terrorist groups, making detection and disruption more challenging. There is an anticipated increase in the exploitation of emerging technologies, including encrypted communications, cryptocurrencies, and drones for attacks and propaganda dissemination. A strategic shift toward less governed spaces in other regions is likely, as extremist groups seek to exploit security vacuums. Additionally, the rise of homegrown extremism fuelled by socio-economic disparities and political disenfranchisement is a growing concern. As a complement, Dr. Aleksander OLECH identified the Sahel as the Achilles' heel of Africa where a multitude of challenges extending from religious extremist insurgencies and political instabilities to environmental challenges constitute the vulnerability of the region. He has argued that in this region, the NATO engagement has been limited and there is an urgent need to reinvent the approaches to counter-terrorism by enriching the NGOs and strengthening proactive engagement.

The fourth panel shed light on an immensely pressing issue in efforts of counter-terrorism, namely the emerging and ever-expanding threats and opportunities emanating from the new technological developments. In this line, **Dr. Sıtkı EGELİ** considered the use of drones by non-state actors, especially focusing on the unmanned sea vehicles (USVs), to threaten the critical infrastructures. These new technological devices are easily accessible, their dual-use is hardly manageable and the problem of attribution facilitates their deniability, therefore, rendering them very attractive to non-state actors and terrorist groups. Their use is especially threatening the worldwide undersea fibre-optic cables through which quasi-entirety of the global communication channels is operated. Dr. EGELİ has identified this as an upcoming threat against which we currently have very limited capacity to combat. The problem of technological dual-use was also explored by Mr. Chris BECKMAN who considered the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) as an emerging threat. In fact, especially through the mechanism of prompt injection, terrorist groups can target critical infrastructures and bypass the intended restrictions, thereby becoming an attack vector. He maintains that although it is not realistic to avoid the use of AI, a risk-based approach should be embraced and should give place to mitigation methods to reduce vulnerabilities. Many of our existing software mitigation methods are effective against vulnerabilities in AI systems, but unless we understand the threat, our teams will not know how to prioritize them and apply precautions accordingly. On a more optimistic tone, Mr. Ahmet KAYGUSUZ, presented the competencies that Türkiye has acquired in the fight against terrorism, especially through the development of the arsenal with the admirable effort of the Secretariat

of Defence Industries. In brief, Mr. KAYGUSUZ provided an extensive analysis of Türkiye's experience on critical technologies used for counter terrorism with a detailed exposé of the contemporary capacities of Türkiye in border management and protection.

The fifth panel, entitled "Threat Perspectives for the Next Decade" took place under the moderation of Prof. Giray SADIK and the problem of "*What are the threats on the horizon and what is the foreseeable future?*". In this discussion Dr. ASHRAF raises the importance of inclusionary and diversifying activity in the idea of a multi-civilisational order as advocated by Russia and China for decades rather than perpetuating the occidental tendency to discredit any unconventional discourse. In this argument, he reiterates the importance of understanding the enemy as the essential ingredient for success in the future endeavours for counter terrorism. Indeed, while he does not deny the importance of warfare and territorial supremacy, nothing is more crucial than cerebral supremacy. On the other hand, Dr. Colin CLARKE defines the current situation as a kaleidoscope and an ever-extending complex picture. He emphasizes that "*nothing ever falls off the plate"* as the former threats continue to persist while new ones emerge. Indeed, the fringe fluidity and ideological overlap with the strange salad bar and different bedfellows such as the white supremacists going green. According to him, in the future the threat will become even more diverse and fragmented as technology will continue to be a force multiplier for terrorist groups.

During the last panel on the ongoing COE-DAT Projects such as the "Russia-Ukraine Conflict's Impact on Terrorism", presented by Prof. Giray SADIK who maintained that terrorists are also learning in parallel to our increasing efforts in counter terrorism through cutting-edge research. Furthermore, Prof. Gabor NYARY, who is a leading researcher for the COE-DAT project investigating the confluence of AI and terrorism, posits that as AI continues to evolve, its potential to be exploited by terrorist organizations poses a significant and growing threat to global security, and this project explores how terrorists could leverage AI to amplify their operations and the strategic countermeasures that security forces must adopt in response. Finally, **Prof. Yavuz ERCİL** shared the current status in a flagship project of COE-DAT, entitled "Strategic Level Terrorism Exercise Scenario Development Project" aiming to provide a software for the simulation and training in the field of defence against terrorism and for the development counter-terrorism strategies.

Closing Remarks

General, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear esteemed guests and scholars,

As we wrap up our Combined Terrorism Experts Conference and Defence Against Terrorism Executive Level Seminar, I sincerely hope you found it as rewarding as I did. It has truly been a pleasure and an honour to welcome you here in Ankara.

Over the past two days, we have engaged in fruitful discussions and shared insights on a variety of terrorism and counter-terrorism related topics. We gained valuable knowledge from our speakers and panellists, exploring current trends and challenges in counter-terrorism. Additionally, we identified gaps and opportunities for future collaboration and action. I believe we now have a clearer understanding of the “unknowns” which is certainly a positive outcome.

I want to extend my gratitude to all the speakers and panellists for their outstanding presentations and contributions. Your insights have greatly enhanced our understanding of terrorism and provided us with practical recommendations for refining our policies and best practices.

I also want to thank each of you, our distinguished participants, for your exhilarated engagement. Your diverse perspectives and expertise have enriched our discussions, and your thought-provoking questions and comments have sparked further dialogue and reflection.

I hope this seminar has been a valuable experience for you, offering new knowledge, idea exchanges, networking opportunities, and fostering a shared understanding. And let’s not forget the importance of our coffee breaks for those informal discussions and connections!

I trust you enjoyed meeting new colleagues, building friendships, discovering new places, and immersing yourselves in different cultures. I encourage you to stay connected with one another and with us likewise.

Before we conclude, I would like to express my appreciation once again to all the members of COE-DAT who worked tirelessly to organize the event, to our academicians for their support in insights.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our esteemed participants for their involvement in this seminar.

I wish you a safe return to your homes and look forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

With that, I hereby officially declare the DAT Executive Level Seminar is closed.

Thank you very much!

Halil Sıddık AYHAN

Colonel (TÜR A)

Director, COE-DAT

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