

# Partnering Against Violence

Tackling extremism requires cooperation

**The extraordinary and deadly events of the past decade have drawn the world's attention to the threat of terrorism. To combat violent extremist organizations, it is essential to develop strategic partnerships globally and regionally. Most recently, the European Union and the United States reached an agreement to increase cooperation, collaboration and information sharing in the fight against this threat. Through this first U.S.-EU Seminar on Preventing Violent Extremism, held in Brussels in June 2010, the partners agreed to a joint strategy to confront "a serious threat posed by violent extremists who have become radicalized and have turned to terrorist means." The joint strategy reflects the seminar's conclusion that homegrown terrorism "is a transnational challenge that calls for an international response."**

Europe is increasingly concerned with the radicalization of its youth. The United Kingdom in particular faces challenges in the battle against homegrown Islamic radicalization. *The Daily Telegraph* reports that the U.K. may be home to more Islamic extremists than any other Western country. As British citizens, they may travel visa-free throughout the EU and to the U.S. Most British Muslims are of Pakistani descent, and according to *The New Republic*, could access terrorist training camps in the tribal belt along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

In Germany, home to a large number of Muslim immigrants, the threat of Islamic extremism seems to be growing. Authorities have stopped several attacks plotted by homegrown terrorist cells. Also, several of the 9/11 suicide bombers, including leader Mohammed Atta,

came from a cell in Hamburg where, according to *The Independent*, the "9/11 attacks on the United States were secretly conceived and planned." In October 2009, German intelligence agents broke up another terrorist cell in Hamburg, which reportedly used the mosque frequented by Atta and his cohorts as a meeting place.

The U.K. and Germany are not alone. The Netherlands Interior Ministry published a 2004 report titled "From Fatwa to Jihad" examining the radicalization of a portion of the country's Muslim population of 1 million. France, also home to a substantial Muslim population, is striving to improve integration while respecting religious freedom.

Since 2001, the EU, Russia and the U.S. have stepped up cooperation to defeat international terrorist networks.

The European Commission developed an action plan to fight terrorism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, according to the Justice and Home Affairs Ministry website. The plan defines "a common concept



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Officials from the United States and European Union sign documents in June 2010 at EU headquarters in Brussels. Europe and the United States agreed to a deal allowing Washington to access bank data to track terrorist financing after easing European concerns over privacy rights.



British police conduct an investigation in Liverpool, following the April 2009 arrests of 12 people in an anti-terror operation. Motivated by these and other events, the U.S. and the EU held their first seminar on violent extremism in June 2010.



German security officials lead three terrorist suspects to Karlsruhe's federal court in September 2007. Prosecutors accused the men of planning "imminent" attacks on Frankfurt airport and the U.S. military base in Ramstein. German law enforcement agencies have successfully disrupted terrorist cells since 2001.



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of terrorist offenses” and establishes legal frameworks and facilitates counterterrorism cooperation and information sharing within the EU and with partner nations, specifically the U.S., Russia and countries on the EU’s periphery. The plan places particular importance on supporting the United Nations and adhering to the U.N.’s conventions and resolutions.

The United Nations also has a role to “enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism,” according to the U.N. Global Terrorism Strategy, adopted by the General Assembly in September 2006. Included in the strategy are measures to address the conditions that encourage radicalization and extremism by promoting justice, tolerance, economic and social development,

human rights and good governance. The U.N. strategy document is significant because it is the first time that all member nations “have agreed to a common strategic approach to fight terrorism.” The U.N. serves as a facilitator to increased international collaboration against terrorist networks.

Close cooperation with the U.S. remains important for the EU. According to the European Commission website, six “groundbreaking” agreements have been signed with the United States, including “two police cooperation agreements between Europol and U.S. law enforcement authorities, two agreements on judicial criminal cooperation regarding extradition and mutual legal assistance, an agreement on the transfer of passenger data and an agreement on container security.”



NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen gives a press conference at the end of the meeting of foreign ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Russia Council in Brussels in December 2009. Russia aids the NATO mission in Afghanistan by providing transit routes for non-lethal military supplies.



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Joint statements from the EU and Russia—“Common Spaces of External Security” and “Freedom, Security and Justice”—focus on terrorism and strengthening cooperation between Europol and Russian law enforcement.

Recognizing the global nature of terrorist networks, Russia, which faces domestic Islamist-led insurgencies in its North Caucasus republics of Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, has also strengthened cooperation with NATO and the U.S., partnering in the war against al-Qaida and Taliban extremists in Afghanistan. Russia provides transit routes for military supplies and shares counterterrorism information.

Links between terrorist groups, organized crime and narcotics trafficking are of high importance to Russian leaders. *The Independent* reports that the country’s heroin addiction rate has reached “epidemic proportions” and Russia’s anti-drug agency reports that Russia consumes more heroin than any other nation. According to a paper by Mikhail Troitskiy written for the Kennan Institute, Russia sees room for improved cooperation on NATO drug-interdiction efforts in Afghanistan. Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization has emphasized that NATO and CSTO have essentially the same main tasks: combating terrorism and drug trafficking.

In June 2010, the presidents of the U.S. and Russia released a joint statement on counterterrorism cooperation promising to build on an “already robust partnership.” The statement points to the close work on the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the U.S.-Russia Counterterrorism Working

Group, or CTWG, which was established following the 9/11 attacks. According to the U.S. State Department: “Through the CTWG, the United States and Russia are working together to combat terrorism and other international threats by focusing on several important areas including Afghanistan, counternarcotics, United Nations designations of terrorists and terrorist financiers, terrorism finance, intelligence sharing, law enforcement, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Man Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), and transportation security.” The CTWG boasts many accomplishments, including agreements on joint border security training for Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, terror financing interdiction, nuclear forensics and reducing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The joint presidential statement also announced U.S. recognition of the “Caucasus Emirate”—Islamic separatists from the Russian North Caucasus—as a specially designated terrorist organization. By working together, Russia and the West weaken extremist networks and improve security in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

In the end, success in the international campaign against extremism will depend on cooperation between security and intelligence forces of many national and transnational organizations. Unified efforts to improve information sharing, monitor extremist activities and inhibit the spread of extremist recruiting propaganda are fundamental to effective counterterrorism. Accordingly, the EU and U.S. are planning a second violent extremism seminar, in mid-2011. □