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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

The European Union is in crisis. It is labeled a migration crisis, though it has nothing to do with migration. The impact of a constellation of factors— Islamophobia, identity issues, changing demographics, technological change, pervasive social media platforms, acts of terrorism and impending fears of more attacks, rising income inequality, austerity and post-recession economics, and uncertainty about the future have converged on migration as the common thread of social, economic, and political malaise. Each factor in its own way may have had only a tangential effect on the average person, but cumulatively, these factors have been devastating. Each factor created the need for an "other," something tangible, physical that could be seen, counted, and easily identified and understood; cumulatively, these factors vied for political expression to explain present predicaments, assuage a national disorientation, and provide social cohesion to offset a growing sense that things are falling apart. Repeatedly, lines from W. B. Yeats's poem "The Second Coming," written in the 1930s when the thunderclouds of fascism were descending on Europe, are invoked to make sense of what appears to be random incoherence: "Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / . . . The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity."

With the proliferation of social media and the constancy of dissemination erasing the boundaries between "fact" and "fake," where one person's facts are another person's fake, our ability to discriminate between different forms of information has disappeared. Pervasive "news" media outlets, thriving on opinions rather than facts or on propagandizing facts to tweak the ideology they are promulgating pervert truth to the extent that there is now a growing discipline in "post-truth." As a result, perceptions of reality have displaced reality itself as the arbiter/weathervane of our behavior.

Attitudes toward migration among EU countries are formed by *perceptions* of the number of migrants in their populations. These perceptions have become ingrained, growing more hardened as populism, anti-establishment sentiment, and hard-right parties have emerged from the detritus of the social disorders that enveloped Europe in the wake of the Great Recession. In 2003, these elites were so self-congratulatory with the tools they had developed to manage economies that the Nobel Prize winner Robert Lucas was moved to say: "Macroeconomics was born as a distinct field in the 1940's, as a part of the intellectual response to the Great Depression. The term then referred to the body of knowledge and expertise that we hoped would prevent the recurrence of that economic disaster. My thesis . . . is that macroeconomics in this original sense has succeeded: its central problem of depression prevention has been solved, for all practical purposes, and has in fact been solved for many decades." Except that it hasn't.

The social and political disorders we are seeing now have their roots in disenchantment with the ruling elites that sanctioned austerity as a means of halting the looming financial catastrophe

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that might have resulted in the collapse of the global financial system in the wake of the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2007. These elites were the purveyors of the financial malfeasance and mismanagement that provoked the crisis; these elites were the beneficiaries of the remedial measures that staved off total collapse; these elites were rewarded for their misdeeds as their salaries and bonuses and stock portfolios soared, tripling in the decade after the onset of the recession while families in their countries lost jobs, homes, and security and struggled to remake themselves.² Hence, the profound sense of anger, grievance, resentment, and frustration that teethed the pervasive alienation; hence, the growing disenchantment with democratic norms and anxieties about the future once democracy was seen as failing its promise: security and the belief that the progress it promised would be delivered, that the next generation would be better off than the last, the promise belied by huge leaps in income inequality as the benefits of economic growth, weak at best, skewed in the direction of the 1 percent at the upper bounds of income distribution; hence too, the need to find an "other" on whom to project these overwhelmingly negative phenomena, to take refuge in the nationalisms, long nascent but always an undercurrent of human behavior that had driven Europe into darkness and evil a mere seventy years ago, out of the wreckage of which the European Union, the nations of Europe, bound each other in a common pursuit, hoping to dim the anarchy of war in coming generations. The cohesion that national identity provides creates a social group; the fusion of personal identity and group identity is cathartic, the stronger the bond the more hostile to out-groups. Scapegoats are in high demand.

Migrants are the out-group seized on. Across the European Union, perceptions of the size of migrant populations are in some instances widely out of proportion to the actual numbers: a perception of 32 percent in the United Kingdom compared with the actual size of 13 percent, 28 percent in France compared with 12 percent, 30 percent in Germany compared with 15 percent, and 27 percent in Italy compared with 8 percent. The size of the disparities accounts in large part for anti-immigrant sentiment. In the United Kingdom the disparity undergirds the Brexit vote; in France, the Marie le Pen hard-right vote; in Germany, the vaulting into political prominence of the alt-right; and in Italy, the rise of Mario Salvini, leader of the league that promised the electorate that he would deport five hundred thousand undocumented migrants, who is now Italy's interior minister. (In the United States, the perception of the share of migrants in the population is 37 percent, three times the actual share of 12 percent. This whopping disparity is the bedrock of Donald Trump's support as he rages against open borders and undocumented migrants—"rapists" and other miscreants—pouring across at will, "infecting" the American way of life.)

Perceptions of migrants' education level, employment status, and dependence on welfare also have little bearing on reality. In the United Kingdom, the perception of unemployment among migrants is 27 percent compared with the actual 5 percent; in France, 38 percent compared with 17 percent; in Germany, 39 percent compared with 4 percent; in Sweden, 37 percent compared with 15 percent; and in Italy, 43 percent compared with 15 percent. (In the United States, the disparity is most glaring: the perception of unemployment among migrants is 27 percent compared with the actual 3 percent.)³ By mid-year 2015, 1.3 million migrants—refugees, mainly from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan—entered the European Union, constituting a fourfold increase over the previous year. In 2016, Pew Research found that 50 percent of Europeans believed that refugees were "a burden," "likely to take jobs and social benefits," and 59 percent believed refugees increase the "likelihood of terrorism in their countries."

What is the refugee crisis in the European Union? Surely, it cannot be the numbers—the absorption of slightly more than 1 million refugees into a population of 372 million. The interaction of many factors creates an iterative process that feeds on itself. No differentiation was made between economic migrants and migrants fleeing terror and persecution. Huge inflows of Muslims inspired fear that the social fabric of nation-states would change. These refugees were seen as threats to national labor markets in a Europe that had not fully recovered from the 2008 recession and where unemployment rates remained stubbornly high. The impact of the Paris bombings by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in October 2015 reverberated across the region. Some countries refused the quota of refugees the European Commission proposed. In the absence of vetting, who could tell who was a genuine refugee and who might belong to an extremist group? Muslims and terrorism were conflated; Muslim xenophobia became contagious and thus Europe's conundrum: Muslims as potential terrorists; Muslims as needed labor in an aging Europe. Brussels is stymied. The quintessence of the European Union is the surrender of part of national sovereignty. Now the interests of national sovereignties are suddenly taking center stage. The sprawling, labyrinthine bureaucracy that holds the European Union together is fraying at the seams. The European Union works when an aggregate of national interests can produce consensus, no matter how opaque. It creaks to a halt when national interest takes precedence.

Muslims in the European Union are among the most deprived populations, with less education, lack of access to housing, occupations in low-paying service jobs, significantly higher rates of unemployment, and higher incarceration rates. Social progress indexes are harbingers of bleaker futures, and their underclass status feeds on itself, resulting in permanent disassociation from the mainstream. Muslim youth (15–24) in the European Union are dumped into labor markets for which they have inadequate qualifications and that discriminate against them, regarding them as culturally different, with religious practices that are contrary to the secular practices of Europe, and perhaps sympathetic to Islamic extremism. Much current social commentary postulates that they live in alienated, marginalized communities, with low levels of assimilation into the economic and cultural mainstreams, which makes some of them vulnerable to radicalization, often self-radicalization, and extremism; hence their attraction to ISIS or likeminded groups that provide the ideological underpinnings that give coherence, structure, and meaning to their sense of injustice.⁵

Anti-Muslim sentiment was well entrenched in the European Union before Muslim immigration into Europe began its roller coaster ascent in the early 2000s. In an interview in the *Atlantic* about his book *Journey into Europe: Islam, Immigration, and Identity*, in which he explores the place of Islam in Europe, Akbar Ahmed explains: "There was a time when Muslim scientists, astronomers, surgeons and, mathematicians were at the cutting edge of their disciplines. Muslims were then seen as representing a powerful, sophisticated, and rich civilizational world civilization." Muslims "were very much part of European culture and history, and impacted the Renaissance, Scientific Revolution, and Enlightenment." And that "while many people talk of a 'Judeo-Christian' Europe, the fact is that it is the Judeo, Christian, and Islamic religions, i.e., the Abrahamic faiths, that came together, while engaging with Greek philosophy, to create and nourish what we now know as European civilization." Europe does not contextualize itself in this way today. Muslims are seen as destitute, an encumbrance on society, a threat, bent on destroying social fabrics.

9/11 was the turning point. Before then, Muslims were defined by their country of origin. In Germany, for example, immigrants from Turkey were referred to as "Turks." After 9/11 they

increasingly were defined as "Muslims," in terms of their religion only. The attack in Paris in 2015 and the bombings in Brussels and London in 2016 inspired by ISIS exacerbated tensions. EU attitudes toward their indigenous Muslim populations became more and more intolerant; little effort was made to differentiate between ethnic groups, their countries of origin, and their relationship to their colonial pasts. After the bombings, entrenched attitudes hardened and deepened, becoming more damning of Muslims. The EU population was more prone to see Muslims as a security threat, more likely to see them as alien to their culture and out of step with their values. This attitude deteriorated further after the attacks in Berlin and Nice in 2016 and in London, Manchester, Nice, Stockholm, and Barcelona in 2017, and yet again this year after Trebes, France. The expectation that more attacks are in the works further exacerbates hostility.

Some 1.3 million refugees sought asylum in Europe in 2015, more than 1 million in Germany, a fourfold increase over 2014. More than 50 percent were from three countries—Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.⁷ The huge migration from Syria, especially in 2015 when the deluge overwhelmed the European Union's capacity to process and absorb the refugees, poisoned the political well and led to rising support for right-wing political parties. While the numbers fell by 280,000 for Germany in 2016 as a result of more stringent entry measures put in place after the European Union and Turkey negotiated a deal to limit the number of migrants reaching the Continent by crossing the Aegean Sea that effectively cut off the migrant flow to Europe via Greece, Italy experienced a renewed resurgence of migrants from Syria arriving by the Libya route—Tunisia and Italy are a little over 130 miles apart. An additional 50,000 had made the journey in 2015.⁸

Pew polling about Islamic extremism from 2005 to 2015 reveals a dramatic increase in concerns in the West about rising Islamic extremism and why Muslims are increasingly alienated and marginalized.

Europe has now resorted to drastic measures to curb the inflow and establish harsh guidelines for admission as refugees flee political persecution and imminent danger. Nine other countries—EU members Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia, as well as Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia—followed Austria's lead by imposing several measures to stem the flow of refugees from Greece, which drew howls of protests from Greece, already overburdened by the harsh austerity measures it has to meet.⁹

Between mid-2010 and mid-2016, approximately 1,890,000 migrants came to Germany from outside the European Union. Of these, 680,000 were regular migrants and 1,210,000 were asylum seekers (fleeing conflict and persecution). Of the regular migrants (seeking jobs, reunions with family, and educational opportunities), 40 percent were Muslim. Of the asylum seekers, 74 percent were Muslim. Of the asylum seekers, 670,000 were approved, 540,000 rejected for one reason or another—a fact forgotten by Europeans.

Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany was prepared to give asylum to a million refugees. But as the rate at which refugees were arriving overwhelmed the country's capacity to process them, Europe's welcome turned sour. The outer-perimeter countries erected barriers; some sealed their borders. Public support in Germany for Merkel's "open-door" policy eroded and rebellion in the ranks of her own party—the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)—forced her hand. Germany imposed constraints in January 2016. But the backlash came in Germany's national elections in September 2017 when the anti-immigrant, far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) won 94 seats in the Bundestag and threatened to disrupt the long-time alliance of the CDU and the Christian Social Union (CSU) that together had governed Germany since 1949. 11

Germany is not immune to the anti-immigrant/Muslim trend. Even in 2010, the twentieth anniversary of German unification, the seeds of negativity were well planted. When President Christian Wulff used the occasion to affirm that Islam is part of Germany, 66 percent of non-Muslims disagreed. In another survey that year, 58 percent of non-Muslims endorsed restricting the exercise of Islamic beliefs in Germany, some 75 percent of eastern Germans agreed, and one in three suggested that Muslims should "go back to where they came from." Is

Several polls and studies undertaken in Germany in 2012 found that less than 5 percent of Germans thought Islam was a tolerant religion and only 36 percent believed that Christianity and Islam can live peacefully side-by-side. Furthermore, 53 percent thought that there will always be serious conflicts between these two religions. Only 29 percent agreed with the statement, "The Muslims who live here are part of Germany," while more than 80 percent agreed with the statement, "Muslims must adapt to our culture," and 72 percent believed Muslims in Germany do not want to integrate.¹⁴

In a 2014, a Bertelsmann Foundation think tank survey undertaken in Germany before the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris by Islamist gunmen found that more than half of all Germans viewed Islam as a threat to their country and believed it does not belong in the Western world. Forty percent said they felt like "foreigners in their own country" because of the perceived increase in the Muslim population. ¹⁵ A 2016 study by the University of Leipzig revealed a dramatic rise in Islamophobia among Germans since 2015. More than 40 percent of the public thought the government should forbid Muslims from immigrating to Germany. ¹⁶

In June 2018, the migration issue brought the CDU and the CSU coalition in Germany to the verge of collapse. The CSU, a regional party that exists only in Bayaria, has governed there since 1957. It forms an alliance with the CDU for national elections. The CDU is being challenged by the AfD.¹⁷ AfD made significant gains in both the September 2017 national elections and the October 2017 state elections in Bavaria. Bavaria is the point of entry for most migrants entering Germany. Interior minister Horst Seehofer, leader of the CSU, gave up his position as governor of Bavaria to accept his present portfolio, promising a "master plan" to tackle immigration. As governor he opposed Merkel's open-borders immigration policy. Now his CSU leadership is under threat from Markus Soeder, the new governor of Bavaria, who has adopted a more strident anti-immigrant position. Within weeks of Italy's new government's refusal to allow a boat with 629 immigrants to dock, Seehofer, in defiance of Merkel and using the executive powers of his ministry that allowed him to act unilaterally in some matters, proposed to undo elements of Merkel's open-borders policy. Turning away immigrants at the border would, of course, simply shift the problem to Mediterranean countries, such as Greece and Italy, and weaken the European Union itself. Merkel capitulated, abandoning her open-borders policy and agreeing to establish "transit centers," at the German-Austrian border for asylum seekers who have registered in other EU countries.

In mid-January 2016, Austria temporarily suspended the Schengen agreement. Announcing the measure, Chancellor Werner Faymann said: "If the EU does not manage to secure the external borders, Schengen as a whole is put into question. . . . Then each country must control its national borders." He added that if these borders are not controlled in the near future, "the whole EU [will be] in question." In the October 2017 elections, a coalition of the Christian Democrat Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), with an avowedly anti-immigrant agenda, brought the long-standing "Grand Coalition" between Social Democrats (SPÖ) and Christian Democrats to an end.

After the CDU and CSU reached their bargain in Germany in July 2018, Austria's chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, was quick to respond, threatening to reimpose controls on its border with Italy. Schengen, the core of the free movement of people, lies in the balance.

Kurz, who leads the conservative ÖVP, formed a coalition with the FPÖ, making Austria the first Western European government with a far-right-wing party in government. Italy soon followed with the coalition of the populist anti-establishment Five Star Movement (F5S) and the League. Austria, which took over the rotating presidency of the European Union on July 1, will require Syrian, Afghan, and African refugees seeking asylum to file their asylum applications before entering the bloc, a radical shift from the European Union's current asylum system.

In Denmark, the government has gone to great lengths to force assimilation, introducing laws to regulate life in twenty-five low-income and heavily Muslim enclaves, referred to as "ghettos." As reported in the *New York Times*, Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, in his 2018 New Year's address to the nation, echoing the harsh rhetoric of Donald Trump, "warned that ghettos could 'reach out their tentacles onto the streets,' by spreading violence and that because of ghettos 'cracks have appeared on the map of Denmark." Among the new laws: "ghetto children" must be separated from their families for twenty-five hours a week for mandatory instruction in "Danish values." Such is the degree of insensitivity to the language about immigrants that the word "ghetto" is used, bringing with it echoes of the separation of Jews under the Nazis.

In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, leader of the conservative Fidesz party, won a ruling majority for the fourth time on a single-issue campaign against immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants. The share of Hungary's population that is immigrant is the lowest among EU countries. The share that is Muslim, lower still. Yet, anti-Muslim sentiment stands at 72 percent compared with the 43 percent EU average. Hungary frames its anti-migration in terms of a "culture crusade," nothing less than the preservation of pure Hungarian identity. Among ten EU countries, only Greece, according to the Pew Research Center's National Identity Index, is more exclusionary regarding national identity. Islam is a "civilizational" problem. So cruel are the conditions facing the few refugees who manage to make their way into the country that the United Nations called on European countries not to send asylum seekers to Hungary under the Dublin rule, which requires asylum seekers to apply for refugee status in the first country they enter.

There are at least 1.6 million Muslims in Italy, about 4.8 percent of the population, compared with public perceptions of 25 percent, rising to 31 percent within four years. They account for approximately one-third of all foreigners. The International Organization for Migration reports that 171,635 migrants and refugees entered Europe by sea during 2017, with 70 percent arriving in Italy and the remainder divided between Greece, Cyprus, and Spain. These figures compare with 363,500 arrivals by sea to the same countries during 2016. The number of migrants peaked in 2016 with over 181,000, an increase of over 18 percent compared with 2017. In the first five months of 2018, the number of arrivals reached 16,500. Overall, between 2013 and June 2018 more than 700,000 migrants arrived on Italian shores.

Fifty thousand Italian citizens are Muslim, and although Islam constitutes the second-largest religion in Italy after Roman Catholicism, it is not recognized as an official religion, unlike Buddhism and Judaism, which have far fewer followers. This status allows the government to control the number of mosques and prayer facilities that are built and registered, but it puts a brake on integration into the larger society. Italy ranks first in 2014 in ratings of EU countries having an unfavorable opinion of Muslims. A 2016 Pew poll found that some 63 percent of

Italians had negative views of Muslims, largely attributable to the huge surge in migrants crossing the Mediterranean from a largely lawless Libya, once an Italian colony, to Lampedusa and adjacent sites in southern Sicily.²⁷ A manifesto by the most recent Italian government, a coalition of the F5S movement and the vehemently anti-immigrant right wing, calls for the deportation of some half a million undocumented migrants. It also calls for some modification to the Dublin rule and financial support from the rest of the European Union as it has increasing borne the cost of handling the growing number of migrants,

Because Italian law stipulates that for a child to be an Italian citizen, one parent must be an Italian citizen, children born of immigrants are not eligible for citizenship, nor are the children of their children if that pattern of marriage continues to exist. This increasing demographic bulge living in marginal circumstances with no fixed sense of identity and certainly, with little sense of belonging, will be a hive possibly prone to radicalization.

In the United Kingdom, a YouGov poll found that 56 percent of the English think that Islam poses a threat to Western liberal democracy. A poll reported by Ipsos MORI shows that 48 percent do not believe that Islam is compatible with the British way of life; 51 percent believe that the growth of Muslim communities in Britain threatens the survival of the white British majority; and just 24 percent think Muslims are compatible with the British way of life. After the attacks in Westminster, Manchester, and London Market in 2015–2017, these attitudes hardened. In Belgium, a similar pattern of attitudes has emerged. Over a decade, the percentage of the population that is Muslim more than doubled, from 3 percent in 2005 to about 6 percent in 2010 and to 7.6 percent in 2016. Some estimates put the Muslim population of Brussels at 25 percent. Integration into Belgian life through language, education, and employment has remained patchy. Bilingualism—Flemish and French—makes it hard for immigrants, mostly those from North Africa who speak only French, to find work and assimilate. Governance is bifurcated because of the French/Walloon divide and deep distrust among officials.

Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe frequently hold diametrically opposing views of the "other." Hence antagonism, fear, hostility, and the drift to declaring states of emergency is arrogating more powers to the state, subjugating human rights, and causing further alienation and exclusion among those who become targets of such arrogation. It was the driving force behind Brexit and the catalyst for the rise of the alt-right in Holland, Austria, Germany, and France, the election of "illiberal" democracies in Poland and Hungry, and the genesis of much of the populism and nativism sweeping Europe and may, in the end, undermine the European Project itself.

The crisis of identity will get worse, an existential crisis in the making will see Europe's demographic landscape change. The "native" populations are shrinking as birth rates dip below replacement levels to an average of 1.6 percent. ³² The migrant/Muslim populations are increasing and will continue to do so even in the absence of migration because of birth rates well above replacement levels. Already there is a shortage of labor in most countries as they strive to grow their economies while burdened with aging populations and falling productivity. A recent article posted by the Pew Research Center sets out three scenarios between 2016 and 2050: zero migration, medium migration (reverting to historical norms before the refuge crisis), and high migration (prevailing at 2014–mid-2016 norms). With zero migration and current fertility rates, the share of Muslims in Europe's population would jump from 4.9 percent in 2016 to 7.4 percent in 2050, an increase of 51 percent. The medium scenario, most likely according to migration experts, would see the Muslim population more than double to 11.2 percent, an increase of 228 percent. Under the zero-migration scenario, Europe's total population (Muslim and non-Muslim)

would shrink from 521 million to 482 million; under the "normal" scenario it would decrease to 517 million.³³

Aggregation of the data in the surveys, studies, and commissions these articles cite illuminates what the French sociologist Gilles Kepel calls "*la fracture*," the rise of a seemingly insurmountable barrier between Muslims and non-Muslims—the more Europe has become Muslim, the more it becomes anti-Muslim. In the United Kingdom, multiculturalism is losing ground. In France, an emphasis on integration and assimilation is increasing. ³⁴ For now, at least, suspicion, surveillance, and antipathy will continue to be the lot of Muslims and especially immigrants from Muslim countries. In the current strong populist anti-immigrant stance of political parties that threaten to overwhelm the mainstream, the much-needed debate on the role of Islam in a modern society is unlikely to gain traction anytime soon. Rather, the schisms within Europe will grow, and cracks in the integrity of the European project will become more pronounced.

For this special issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy*, Emanuela del Re, our guest editor, has assembled contributions from prominent scholars, academics, and researchers from Europe, Africa, and the United States. Their focus is the stability and sustainability in Euro-Mediterranean migrations. Del Re is eminently suited to the task. She is a professor of sociology and the national coordinator of the Sociology of Religion section of the Italian Sociological Association (AIS) at the University of Rome, a partner with the Moakley Chair of Peace and Reconciliation in the chair's Forum for Cities in Transition, and a member for the F5S movement in the Italian Parliament, Chamber of Deputies, and deputy foreign minister in the Italian government.

Notes

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