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Commentary: The ‘Migrant Crisis’ and Ethnic Minority Integration in Europe

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During the past couple of years, a variety of new books on the ‘migrant crisis’ and ethnic minority integration in Europe have been published, covering the uncontrolled mass migration into Europe, the populist reaction and re-emphasis of nation-states, and how this migration may affect traditional European societies; however, less attention has been paid to the inevitable question of how all these newcomers are likely to integrate into European populations. This latter topic, then, constitutes the focus of this commentary.

Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System, co-authored by Alexander Betts, Professor of Forced Migration and International Affairs at the University of Oxford, and Paul Collier, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, is essentially a critique of international refugee policy. Questioning whether refugees have the right to travel directly to Europe, they suggest that of course they do insofar as it is necessary in order for them to access a safe haven, however it is not an unqualified right to move; it becomes necessary only in as much as we collectively fail to create a system that refugees’

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needs are met in a coherent way. Yet international refugee systems are badly failing, in their opinion. Most refugees, they argue, want to work, however are restricted from doing so when they could contribute significantly to economic development, both in receiving countries and later in original home countries. Instead, a great many refugees face urban destitution.

Dysfunctional asylum standards continue to differ between countries. While the Schengen Agreement (1985) removed border controls within a vast area of Europe (now including 26 European Union countries within the Schengen Area), according to the later Dublin Regulation (1990, implemented in 1997, revised in 2003 and 2013, with a number of updates), asylum-seekers must declare their status in the first EU country of entry (e.g. Greece, Italy, Spain), and therefore can be returned from secondary countries (e.g. Germany, Sweden) where they settle to these initial countries; this, the authors argue, has been highly impractical so has been repudiated by some countries such as Germany and opposed as unfair by Italy and Greece. Important questions are which countries should accept how many refugees, which countries should be permitted to now close their borders, and what might be expected of these refugees once they settle in Europe. A high proportion (80%) of migrants have been men. The authors raise three fundamental ethical questions: What is our moral duty toward refugees? Do migrants, even if they are not refugees, have a global moral right to migrate to the country of their choice? And what are the moral obligations that flow from this influx (notably in Germany, after more than a million arrived)?

Betts and Collier stress that it is first the responsibility of neighbouring countries within the region of origin to accept as many refugees as possible, given their cultural similarity; yet then higher income countries in Europe could substantially benefit from migrants and indeed it is their responsibility to integrate them economically, based on need. The distinction between refugees and economic migrants seems rather arbitrary; refugees need to be rescued in a humanitarian sense, at least initially, whereas economic migrants are seeking to improve their lives; refugees are not simply migrants insofar as they do not choose to leave their original country—they are forced to leave. Yet refugees soon become aware of economic opportunities so tend to gravitate to more affluent countries offering employment. In a country such as Germany, ‘integration is the best strategy for forging successful lives’; yet ‘a significant proportion of refugees may well be more likely than most immigrants to prefer to retain community and culture’ (122). Germany has rapidly adopted a policy of dispersion, localized quotas, and anti-discrimination; moreover it is now discouraging return migration after the

conflict ends (although the authors suggest that eventually, after training, returning could benefit original sending countries).

Whether migrants would want to return to rebuild a less-developed country after living for years in a highly developed country in Europe seems questionable. Nevertheless, there has been a shift in attitudes from benevolent welcome to resentment and fear in Germany and Sweden. Training and employment (together obviously with language learning) are critical to integration, as the authors stress, however competition with the existing skilled labour force they perhaps do not consider as much as they could; so their main prognosis—utilizing migrants for economic development—may perhaps seem overly optimistic if not oversimplified.

Fortress Europe: Dispatches from a Gated Continent, by British journalist Matthew Carr, describes the resistance of Europe to mass migration. While somewhat dated (first published in 2012, and much of the book relates to the author's personal experiences interviewing migrants several years previously, although in an Afterword he does bring us more up to date, at least into the past year), this book provides useful background to the present 'migrant crisis'. A general theme is the fight against 'irregular' migration, concomitant with the 'war on terror'. The EU, he points out, 'is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities' (6). He suggests that while 'there is much about Europe's borders that is disturbing and horrific, these borders also contain other stories of the tenacity, resilience, and desire of the migrants who cross these borders; of ordinary Europeans from many different countries who have gone to extraordinary lengths to help them; of border zones that often contradict and subvert the expectations placed upon them' (7). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has described a 'migration governability crisis' in which 'states feel they have lost the sovereign right to determine who enters and remains in their territories' (24). 'The ability to expel or remove unwanted people has always been a symbolic test of the state's sovereignty over its national borders, yet in recent decades this ability has become an essential component of Europe's border enforcement efforts' (127).

There has been mounting British popular opposition to asylum-seekers, reinforcing 'the general climate of suspicion and mistrust of asylum-seekers as serial abusers of British generosity' (115). There is a common perception that many if not most refugees are actually economic migrants seeking to bypass Europe's immigration regulations. Moreover, the EU policies toward migrants contrast with national priorities. The European border agency

Frontex, created by the European Commission in 2005, has become preoccupied almost exclusively with irregular migration in facing these contradictory expectations; in the process refugee protection has become secondary to security issues. A populist backlash against migrants, often led by far right ultranationalist groups, has responded to jihadist acts of terrorism. Yet in France, even the national government's new ministry of immigration and national identity was charged with the objective of dealing with a 'crisis' in national identity which Sarkozy attributed largely to the presence of Muslim immigrants. More generally, is European identity being undermined by mass migration? Carr suggests that identity has become a recurring theme in the context of European integration. 'The very notion of the nation-state as a repository of cultural uniqueness is being challenged by globalization and migration' (208-210), yet European borderlands have long been characterized by complex intermingling of ethnic minorities.

The need for 'cultural dialogue' is nothing new to Europe; however there has been recent condemnation of '*multi-kulti*' in Germany not only by populist nationalists but also Angela Merkel. The author notes that in maintaining 'Fortress Europe', in reality this represents a policy of effectively 'locking out the world's poor', just as Australia and the United States have been attempting. Carr concludes that despite many sorts of blockages by European states migrants continue—in fact increasingly—to find their way to Europe in search of asylum and work, often by

extraordinarily convoluted and dangerous routes. All this constitutes a political and moral failure on a massive scale. It is shameful and contemptible that one of the richest trading blocs in the world should depict migrants as criminal intruders and potential invaders. It is a gross violation of the EU's moral and political values [...] Although some European politicians have argued that enforcement is a precondition for social cohesion and integration, this morbid and mutually reinforcing dynamic involving governments, the media, and the public has stigmatized immigration in general and legitimized the most xenophobic and racist anti-immigrant politics of ultranationalists and the extreme right in ways that threaten to derail the entire European project. (246-7)

He continues, 'Today it is incumbent on Europeans to take down the "walls" that have been constructed [...] in order to demonstrate their commitment to the principles on which the union was founded, and to prevent their fears, prejudices, and hatreds from corroding these ideals' (254). Repeatedly, Carr emphasizes the economic need for migrants to more affluent European countries with aging populations, and a fundamental change of attitudes, reflected in many

Europeans responding to ‘the senselessness of the European borders’ with acts of generosity and solidarity (270).

Whereas in *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*, another British journalist, Douglas Murray, focusses on what he seems to view as the inevitable popular resistance to mass migration. Melodramatically, his book begins with the comment that ‘Europe is committing suicide [...] Europe is in the process of killing itself [...] I mean that the civilization we know as Europe is in the process of committing suicide and that neither Britain nor any other Western European country can avoid that fate [...] As a result, by the end of the lifespans of most people currently alive Europe will not be Europe and the peoples of Europe will have lost the only place in the world we had to call home’ (1). This fate is due first to the mass movement of peoples into Europe; secondly, Europe has lost faith in its beliefs, traditions and legitimacy; and thirdly, Europe is now deeply weighed down with guilt for its past. The question of what defines being European is about values; this is another debate about which we are wholly confused, Murray suggests.

Disintegration of the nation-states of Europe into one large integrated political union was important, according to some, but whatever one’s views, this is a huge question to leave unresolved at a time of vast population change. ‘The world is coming into Europe at precisely the moment that Europe has lost sight of what it is [...] Even now Europe’s leaders talk of an invigorated effort to incorporate the millions of new arrivals. These efforts too will fail [...] If Europe is going to become a home for the world it must search for a definition of itself that is wide enough to encompass the world’ (7). Murray concludes that the principal question must be who Europe is for. He recognizes that Europe’s problems are the world’s, that even talking about this represents a Eurocentric way of thinking—to which he replies that there is no legitimate reason why Europeans should not feel Eurocentric—after all, Europe is the home of the European peoples. In his view, perhaps the European lifestyle, culture and outlook may survive in places, but in much of Western Europe the demographic projections show what the continent’s future will be—but it will not be Europe anymore (210).

Murray suggests that massive underestimations of the scale of migration were predictable. During the post-war years, *gastarbeiter* (“guest workers”) in Germany and other Western European countries were initially intended to be temporary additions to a depleted labour force, but their families joined them and they stayed. He suggests that immigration soon got out of hand, whilst political parties, if not individuals avoided ‘accusations of closed-mindedness and intolerance, xenophobia and barely disguised racism’ (27-28). In the

meantime, an aspect of demographic shift is that poorer migrants tend to have more children. Refugees—if not economic migrants—have aroused sympathy: ‘[...] a movement that risked becoming depersonalized by the sheer numbers suddenly took on a human face [...] The wish to welcome all comers ashore may not have been a natural compulsion throughout history, but it had become a natural one to Europeans now, and its opposite unimaginable’ (82-3). In August 2016 Jean-Claude Juncker proclaimed: ‘Borders are the worst invention ever made by politicians’ (178)—which is how the European Union was created, then the Schengen Agreement which effectively erased European borders—and allowed vast numbers of migrants to move freely about much of the continent, constrained ineffectively only by the later Dublin regulation on asylum.

Murray raises challenging questions: Should Europe be a place to which anybody in the world can move and call themselves at home? Should Europe be a haven for absolutely anybody in the world fleeing war? Is it the job of Europeans to provide a better standard of living to anybody in the world who wants it? He comments that ‘liberals in Europe might rightly have wondered whether societies that are the product of lengthy political and cultural evolutions could be sustained with immigration at such rates’ (295). As the distinction between legal and illegal immigration continues to blur, major cities first, then whole countries will finally become ‘nations of immigrants’ (a novel concept, perhaps, in Europe but the very foundations of pluralist countries elsewhere).

Much of this book describes the popular backlash to mass migration and rapid social change. Clearly Murray is of the opinion that politicians do not always represent public opinion; policies to ‘open the door’ have tended to run counter to public approval. More specifically, in a chapter titled ‘Controlling the Backlash’ he points out that police forces have tended secondarily to attack or limit right-wing ultranationalist factions whereas the primary problems are not dealt with. Muslim controversies have exacerbated tensions. Anti-immigration and anti-Muslim demonstrations have been attacked by authorities and police while radical Muslims are given free rein. Muslim abhorrence of homosexuality has been contrary to prevailing current Western values, and protesting factions and some politicians in the Netherlands have loudly claimed that Muslims have been undermining Dutch culture. Problems exist between minorities and their adopted countries, the author adds, but also between different types of Muslims.

Interesting data on the rapidity of ethnic change are provided. For example, by 2011 less than half (44.9%) of London residents were ‘white British’, who were now a minority in 23

out of 33 boroughs; there has been a significant decline in ‘declared Christians’ in the U.K. while the Muslim population nearly doubled; East Europeans in the U.K. increased from 170 thousand to 1.2 million in just ten years (2004-13). Yet there has been no policy for integration: ‘we just believed migrants would integrate’ (61). In response to mounting evidence that migrants were failing to integrate in Germany, Merkel commented in a much-quoted speech in 2010, ‘Of course, the approach to build a multicultural society and to live side-by-side and to enjoy each other has utterly failed’. Five years later, however, faced with the pressing need to accept mass migration, she encouragingly said ‘Wir schaffen das’ (‘we can do this’). Murray emphasizes particularly German sense of guilt as influencing a welcoming attitude toward migrants. For his part, French President Sarkozy echoed Merkel’s disapproval of multiculturalism: ‘We have been too preoccupied with the identity of those who arrived and not enough with the identity of the country which welcomed them’ (94-7)—what has been called ‘*le grand remplacement*’. Citing American political philosopher Samuel Huntington, ‘Multiculturalism is in its essence anti-European civilization. It is basically an anti-Western ideology’ (102). But in Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Sweden there has recently been increasing abhorrence of multiculturalism. Rather, in Germany a move from multiculturalism more toward *leitkultur* (‘core culture’) has been advocated. Conversely, Europe’s challenge has always been to change its ‘fairly monocultural past to fit in with its very multicultural present’ (106), as Murray concisely explains—not easy to accomplish in the mindset of the nation-state. He suggests, however, that it is unclear how many migrants simply want to enjoy their rights in Europe and how many want to become Europeans.

To be sure, a vital aspect of integration is economic. Murray sceptically summarizes typical reasons (which he calls ‘excuses’) for accepting mass migration: that immigration on this scale is an economic benefit for receiving countries; that in an ageing society increased immigration is necessary to maintain or expand the labour force; that in any case immigration brings in new cultures which make societies more interesting; and not the least that globalization makes mass migration unstoppable.

At the very least, Murray’s book does not shy away from controversial issues and questions, and it documents the many recent attacks in the name of terrorism, which obviously may influence public opinion if not politicians as well. If, as he suggests, Europe is dying, the same pessimistic tone is found in *Europe’s Last Chance*, by Guy Verhofstadt, a former prime minister of Belgium and member of the European Parliament, who, however, presents a thorough argument in favour of strengthening European unity. He sees ‘old nationalisms’ as a

threat to European unity. So, too, is the new Euroscepticism: ‘Although, from a rational point of view, a European federation is the only option, a strong countermovement has been on the rise for some time now: Euroscepticism’ (26). Eurosceptics, he suggests, ‘eagerly exploit all kinds of fallacies and emotional arguments’ (27). In his view, a federal Europe represents the only way to get rid of the ‘nationalist delusion’ still haunting Europe, evidenced in every EU member state still ‘under the spell of its national identity’, excluding population groups deemed to be weak or too different from the national norm, restricting linguistic diversity, discriminating against minorities, and imposing the same cultural or religious prescriptions across whole societies. So he considers a federal Europe to be the antidote to such practices. He points out that there are few countries in Europe where multilingualism is the norm, and where minority languages are tolerated as more than simply a curiosity, and are officially recognized, where minorities’ cultural heritage is valued. ‘A federal Europe [...] rests on the [...] preservation of pluralism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, and diversity in all its forms and guises’ (34). Unfortunately there has been a recent and increasing return of ‘virulent nationalism’ advocated strongly by ultranationalist political parties and movements which ‘shamelessly usurp terms like “freedom” and “democracy” when they stand for the complete opposite’ (77). Verhofstadt stresses that the future of Europe cannot rest on national identity. L’Europe des Nations is a relic of the past. Indeed, if Europe is to have any future at all, younger generations believe in a united Europe so will not be imprisoned by national identity nor stopped by national borders—the future of Europe lies beyond nationalism (84-5).

The rejection of multiculturalism by such ultranationalists—and even the German Chancellor who recently claimed that *multi-kulti* is dead—reflects much more than just complaints about migrants having inadequate familiarity with the national language or culture; rather ‘it is about drawing clear distinctions regarding who does not belong to a community’ (77-8). Still the *volksgeist*—the ‘glorification of the nation and the exaltation of national individuality and associated ingrained customs and traditions’ (79)—lingers and becomes re-popularized. Verhofstadt writes of an emotional ‘delusional identarian worldview’, evidenced in blind obedience to national traditions which are passed from generation to generation uncritically, even if this demands outright discrimination (84). Much of this discrimination is directed against Muslims. French national identity now seems to be reinforced—even recently by the prevalent national government—through suppression of Muslims, while the increasingly significant far right pushes further for closure of borders and cessation of immigration.

With an increasing number of *jihadi* attacks, terrorism becomes a security issue: ‘The security services mandated to protect European citizens still respect old borders; terrorists and criminals assuredly do not’ (2). Doubtless these attacks play into the hands of the ultranationalists, and inevitably stimulate public resentment. However, most of these self-proclaimed terrorists have been born and raised in Europe. Still, doubtless in the public mind mass migration (especially of Muslims) compounds the issue.

The author notes that more than 10,000 drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean between January 2014 and June 2016. In the five years between 2011 and 2016 there were more than a million Syrian asylum applicants in Europe, of which 28 EU countries accepted less than a third. By mid-2015, there were over 11 million Syrian refugees in the Middle East, at least five million in refugee camps (124). Yet a clear EU asylum and migration policy is lacking. Again, in agreement with Betts and Collier, Verhofstadt emphasizes the responsibility for refugees should first be in neighbouring countries, moreover together with those authors as well as Carr that migrants make a significant economic contribution so should not be viewed simply as a liability.

Finally, let us turn to a recently published book which most directly evaluates multiculturalism in Europe, with the provocative title *Is Multiculturalism Dead?*, by Christian Joppke, a sociology professor at the University of Bern. He intends to respond to the controversies over multiculturalism in the liberal state, and specifically the declarations that multiculturalism is dead. Multiculturalism has been the inevitable result of international migration and diaspora absorption, in Europe and perhaps other countries a preoccupation with immigrant integration, yet he suggests that it would be mistaken to conclude for civic integration that multiculturalism is ‘dead’. He goes on to explain that civic integration is the new prevalent norm. ‘That civic integration, with its centrist touch, differs from, or is even opposed to, multiculturalism seems incontrovertible’ (3). Yet in Europe, while there are alternative views on civic integration, underlying civic integration policy, multiculturalism is necessary in a liberal society. Is multiculturalism really retreating, in favour of civic integration (invented in the Netherlands during the 1990s), or does it persist under a different name? Civic integration policies are not all identical, moreover Joppke questions whether civic integration is liberal enough to render it compatible with liberal multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism tends to be concerned with minority rights (including gay rights). Unlike in Canada, in Europe ‘nowhere has multiculturalism become part of national self-definition; on the contrary, it is perceived as the property or privilege of immigrants and ethnic

minorities' (2). Yet under international law the granting of minority rights is contingent upon the citizenship status of the respective group. This in turn raises the question, which should be protected, minority rights or national rights?

Adding to the semantic confusion, what is 'interculturalism' (a term favoured in Quebec and now Germany), other than an appreciation of diversity? Joppke discusses this at some length, and concludes that this term is little more than 'old wine in new bottles'. Both multiculturalism and interculturalism could be considered identity politics, which of course may vary from country to country (one could perhaps add from countries supporting pluralism versus countries which have been nation-states). Joppke suggests that interculturalism is premised on a critique of multiculturalism; according to the Council of Europe (2008), multiculturalism tends to promote 'communal segregation and mutual incomprehension, while undermining the rights of individuals – particularly women – within minority communities' (53). Joppke goes on to discuss the relationship of the term 'diversity' to multiculturalism, pointing out that while diversity shares with multiculturalism demographic fact and normative-political claim, diversity differs from multiculturalism insofar as focus shifts from the group to the individual. Yet, despite all these semantic nuances, Joppke concludes that 'interculturalism or diversity may be considered continuations of multiculturalism under different names' (60).

As with Murray, Joppke pays particular attention to the issue of integrating Muslims, pointing out that 'undoubtedly, problems of Muslim and Islamic integration are central to multiculturalism's sinking star' (5). He adds, 'The real friction in Europe is not between majority and minority religion but between a non-religious majority and the more intensely felt religiosity of the Muslim minority' (16), which may tend to be illiberal and homophobic (96). The dilemma is that European constitutional law in a liberal democracy ensures religious freedom, whereas conservative Islamic values constrain and conflict with this very liberalism. Moreover, recent terrorist attacks in the name of Islam have further exacerbated tensions and made Europeans increasingly cautious about 'minority rights', thereby multiculturalism.

However, in defence of multiculturalism, Joppke argues that multiculturalism is necessary in a liberal society, even inevitable: 'as long as constitutionalism is in place, we live in societies that are set to become more and more multicultural' (4). In fact, he suggests that 'the central argument of this book [...] is that liberal constitutionalism naturally generates multiculturalism' (5-6). Multiculturalism can be seen as anti-discrimination: 'There is no multiculturalism theory or policy that would not claim to fend off discrimination against minorities; however, the relationship between anti-discrimination and multiculturalism is not

straightforward', rather it is ambiguous (4-6). In fact, the author suggests that particularly in Europe the rise of anti-discrimination is 'strangely unaffected by the crisis of multiculturalism' (115). This leading comment is followed by quite an extensive discussion of anti-discrimination practices in Europe.

Joppke explains that multiculturalism is 'not one but many things'. He contrasts 'new and old world multiculturalisms'—Canadian, American and Australian varieties compared with European (particularly Dutch). He describes various multiculturalism theories: communitarian, radical, and liberal, in the latter making much use of the theorizing of Canadian Will Kymlicka since the 1990s. Yet before getting into such theoretical categorization, this discussion could have benefitted from earlier Canadian writing (soon after multiculturalism became an official national policy in Canada in 1971) fundamentally explaining that multiculturalism can be viewed as ideology, policy, or demographic reality; it is not always clear in this book exactly which form the author is talking about. Additionally, he appropriately points out that multiculturalism (policies?) can be localized. Joppke's own penchant seems to be emphasizing individualism in multiculturalism, or as he puts it a 'multiculturalism of the individual', which makes more sense than an 'unreconstructed multiculturalism of groups' having fewer supporters today. He suggests that this proposed multiculturalism of the individual shares many elements of Kymlicka's liberal multiculturalism, but is distinguished by a less clear-cut boundary between liberal constitutionalism and explicit multiculturalism. In his opinion, 'on the critical side, a multiculturalism theory that centrally rewards the claims of ethnic minority groups, and particularly those that are sedentary and thus "national minorities" (including the indigenous), is too narrowly drawn' (163). There is much very interesting theoretical discussion in this book, however at the end of the day the extent to which Joppke clarifies multiculturalism in Europe, and effectively responds to critics of multiculturalism and claimants of its imminent demise, seems debatable.

Granted, these new books do not necessarily focus primarily on ethnic minority integration in Europe, although the authors raise many pertinent issues bearing on this controversial topic. Yet this still leaves many unanswered questions. Call it what you will—multiculturalism (in various modes), interculturalism, civic integration, anti-discrimination—the central question remains how European countries which have received recent mass migration are to deal most effectively with migrants who are culturally, linguistically, religiously markedly different from most of the existing population. What, exactly, is the meaning of integration? Will European multiculturalism assume different forms from

multiculturalism in historically pluralist countries such as Canada? And not the least, given that ethnolinguistic minorities have long existed in virtually all European countries, diversity is nothing new—but will recognition of minority ‘rights’ gained (often with considerable difficulty) by these historic minorities prevail in a climate of possibly decreasing public patience together with increasing ultranationalism? These are very difficult but essential questions at this time.

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