

# Europe's Coming *Civil War?*

BY JOSEF J. NEUSSER

*The deep concerns of an Austrian expatriot.*

I recently had a conversation with an Austrian friend, a highly regarded financial journalist. I was shocked when he mentioned that there was a high probability of a civil war in Europe within the foreseeable future. When I moved to the United States more than a quarter-century ago, in part with the intention of leaving behind high taxes and an overbearing regulatory environment, I had some notion that Austrians in particular and Europeans in general might someday rebel against those policies. But as the years passed, I increasingly abandoned that hope. There did not seem to be any limits to what tax and regulatory burdens people were willing to bear. That did not mean that people were not angry, but the anger did not result in a rebellion in the voting booth or otherwise.

So what has changed? My friend pointed to an increasing loss of authority by the individual European states, especially on the issue of border control, one of the state's essential functions. With the advent of the European Union, more functions of the nation states were transferred to Brussels. It is not always clear to the man on the street, and sometimes even to the ruling elites, who is responsible for what.

For example, while the confusing economic framework of EU regulations has facilitated the mind-boggling growth of debt, nobody really knows who is liable for the debt in the event of a complete

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or partial default. A relatively small increase in interest rates would render keeping up with the interest payments nearly impossible. After 2008, with the Lehman Brothers collapse and the ensuing worldwide economic crisis, Europeans, especially small investors, became nervous about the future of their savings, particularly retirement savings.

Unlike the somewhat esoteric threat of the debt situation, open borders represent a more immediate threat to economic, financial, and political stability. As recent events in Cologne and other European cities show—and they are only the tip of the iceberg—Europeans no longer feel safe in their daily routines. Officials tell the population that the recent terror attacks in Paris and Brussels are the acts of a handful of deranged individuals, but it is more difficult to explain easily that the sexual molestation of thousands of European women and the massive thefts of wallets, purses, and cellphones are just the aberrant behavior of a few. Initial attempts by the police and the media to keep those criminal acts secret have hardly helped the perception that Europe's leadership has lost control and is not offering transparency.

One very tangible result of the fear these recent migrants have raised in European populations in their path is the rapid increase in weapon purchases. The German news magazine *Focus Online*, citing government data, reports that in Austria at the end of October, gun stores had already sold 70,000 more weapons than in the previous year. For a country with 8.5 million inhabitants and about 900,000 legal weapons in the hands of its citizens, this is a significant increase. Gun stores also report that large numbers of women are among the purchasers. Campaign organizers of one Austrian political party handed out pepper spray during one of their rallies.

In Germany, where gun laws are much stricter, sales of pepper spray surged 600 percent, according to *Focus*. Similar increases can be seen in the purchases of items from taser guns to crossbows. Also, the demand for German shepherd guard dogs has soared, reports the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Another sign of the increasing fear among the population is the rapid growth in civil defense associations (*Bürgerwehr*). These associations range from the sort of neighborhood watch groups found in the United States to biker gangs that have now decided to add “service to their communities” to their portfolio of activities. What is telling is that in both Austria and Germany, the police are openly cooperating with some of these civil defense associations. Similar associations exist in Italy, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Finland.

The European people are concerned. They are starting to ignore the hollow-sounding assurances from their

national governments that there is really nothing to be worried about, and increasingly are taking matters into their own hands. The success in recent German regional elections of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), an anti-immigration party that unites conservatives, libertarians, nationalists, and some members of the bourgeoisie, demonstrates the frustration of a populace that historically has been loath to vote for any but the four major parties. Imagine a third party winning 25 percent of vote in one America's fifty states. In Germany, the reaction

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of the governing elite (and their allies in the mainstream media) has been to call the AfD voters right-wing extremists or Nazis, an accusation which has no basis in reality. In fact, the number of Nazi sympathizers in the AfD is said to be negligible. The public is increasingly perceiving those accusations as an attempt to silence critics. The situation demonstrates the frustration of opinion leaders who are at the verge of losing their influence.

Civil wars are usually the result of three elements. The first is the loss of governing authority by the nation-state. Second, a new regional order is established that steps into the vacuum left by the nation-state. And third, the newly established authorities start to compete with each other.

In the current situation in Europe, nation-states have surrendered control over their borders to the European Union. The European Union, which took over external border controls under the Schengen treaty, has failed miserably in securing the borders against hordes of migrants, allowing millions of primarily young males to come into the country with no idea who these individuals are and what are their most immediate intentions. Official data published by Germany's Statistisches Bundesamt (census

bureau) reports that two million foreigners moved to Germany in 2015 (see *Die Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *Die Zeit*, for example). *Die Welt* also reports that Gunter Brückner, the official at the Statistischen Bundesamt responsible for the census of foreigners, acknowledged that the two million figure just represents a lower limit, as they do not really know how many migrants arrived in Germany in 2015. Only those that have been officially registered are counted among the two million. These migrants are almost entirely made up of Muslims from Arab and other Muslim countries, joining the millions of Muslims who have arrived over the last twenty years in more manageable numbers. While the large majority of those newcomers to Germany have been placed in temporary housing, the German government acknowledges that 100,000 or more of the registered migrants—nobody knows the real number—have disappeared into Muslim neighborhoods where the authority of the state has already been greatly reduced. These primarily Muslim neighborhoods exist in many European countries and are most generally referred to as “no-go zones.” Another name for them is sharia-

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zones, because sharia law at least in part has replaced the law of the land there. In France, the government calls them *zones urbaines sensibles* (ZUS), indicating that the government is concerned about the district, and *zones de sécurité prioritaires* (ZSP), where the government all but acknowledges that it has lost control. Well-known examples of these no-go zones are Molenbeek in Brussels, several suburbs of Paris, large parts of Birmingham, England, and large parts of Malmö, Sweden. The French government says there are 751 ZUSs and 65 ZSPs in France. In Sweden alone, there are 55 no-go zones, according to the Sweden’s National Criminal Intelligence Section, as the *Svenska Dagbladet* reported in March of 2015. Police enter those no-go zones only when they have permission from the local imam, the new *de facto* governing authority, or with overwhelming force. In some of those zones, the fire department and ambulances when

not accompanied by a strong police presence, but also postal carriers and women who are not dressed to Islamic standards, risk injury and even their lives.

Germany also has no-go zones. Leaks from police such as one reported by *Der Spiegel* last July, and by police unions who are concerned about the safety of their members, have shown there are a surprising number of these no-go zones, usually in the proximity of major cities. Germany’s no-go zones have not yet reached the extent of Molenbeek, Paris, or Malmö, but they are growing in both geographic size and number. The true extent is almost certainly significantly larger than admitted in those leaks because the international community has learned from the events in Cologne that the police go to great lengths to suppress information that presents migrants negatively. And the press tends to be complicit. It sometimes takes months until sexual misconduct by Muslim immigrants is reported. These no-go zones represent a clear abdication of authority by the respective national governments.

In England, there has even been a public debate whether sharia should be allowed to replace or substitute all or portions of British law in Muslim majority areas of the United Kingdom. In 2008, the then-primate of the Anglican Church, Rowan Williams, caused an uproar as he argued in favor of allowing sharia law to occupy space alongside British law. He called the introduction of sharia in certain areas “unavoidable.” The incumbent Lord Chief Justice Nicholas Phillips, the most senior judge in England and Wales in 2008, asserted that there was “no reason why Sharia principles, or any other religious code, should not be the basis for mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution,” highlighting that this did not constitute a “parallel legal system” and would never “override English common law.” Self-declared sharia patrols which look for violations of sharia law in England and fairly recently also in Wuppertal, Germany, demonstrate that this legal issue is very much a point of contention today.

Aided by the mainstream media, the governing elites argue that the stream of migrants has reached its apex and is about to decline. It appears that nothing could be further from the truth. A study by the Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies (also called the Doha Institute), for example, shows that between 2011 and 2015, between 22 percent and 24 percent of survey respondents from fourteen of the larger countries in the Arab region have expressed a desire to emigrate. It seems reasonable to assume that this is a conservative estimate for the rest of the countries of the Arab league. In the population-rich countries not included in the survey that are currently engaged in hot wars, such as Libya, Yemen, and Somalia, the percentage

is in all likelihood higher, while in the smaller oil-rich gulf states not included in the survey (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates) it is probably lower. But these latter countries have only a fraction of the population of the former. With a combined Arab regional population of about 365 million, if only half of those expressing their desire to emigrate do so, another forty million people will be heading toward Europe in coming years. Keep in mind this estimate does not include emigrants from the Asian Muslim countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Generally, emigrants from former French colonies move to France, from former British colonies to Great Britain, from former Dutch colonies to the Netherlands, and so forth. Most of the rest, including emigrants from all of the Middle East, move to Germany and, to a much smaller extent, to Sweden. However, Sweden recently re-introduced border controls. Authorities now want to reduce legal immigration to the EU minimum. In January, Sweden's Minister for Home Affairs said that Sweden would expel between 60,000 and 80,000 migrants already in the country. This is significant because Sweden since the 1970s has had the most generous immigration policy in Europe.

The bad news for Europe is that these migrants are acting entirely rationally. They have been coming from all Arab and other Muslim countries. It is not so much the civil war in Syria, which is basically a war for dominance between different confessions of Islam, that is driving the migrants. It is the abominable economic situation in their home countries that spurs them to seek Europe's relatively greener pastures.

If oil is taken out of the statistical computations, the Middle East and North Africa region has one of the worst growth rates in the world (see, for example, the IMF study by George T. Abed and Hamid R. Davoodi entitled "Challenges of Growth and Globalization in the Middle East and North Africa"). It becomes clear that there is hardly any but the most basic of industries in the entire Arab region. When one combines all high-tech exports from all the countries in the Arab region from 2011

through 2013, the total adds up in dollars to less than the high-tech exports from Slovakia, a former Eastern Bloc country, according to World Bank data. Keep in mind there are 365 million people living in the Arab region and there are only 5.4 million inhabitants living in Slovakia.

The Europeans have another problem. The Muslim migrants in Europe have no knowledge of the local language and few job skills. Many are illiterate, especially when it comes to the Latin alphabet. Many seem unwilling to take on jobs that require hard physical work for initially low wages—the way immigrants historically have moved their way up the economic ladder in the United States. In an Islamic culture, hard work and to a lesser extent higher education are not a path to success in life. This situation has not improved with subsequent generations of Muslim immigrants. These generations do not become better educated or more assimilated. They tend to become stricter when it comes to the practice of Islam. By contrast, Croat and Serbian immigrants in Austria put great emphasis on getting their sons and daughters the best education possible, so they can move up in society. Similarly, the first generation of Asians (especially Koreans) in the United States have a track record of working extremely hard so that their children can have the best possible education.

In Europe, there is little need for uneducated employees, especially in the core countries. I have always looked with slight amusement at Europe's technical advances in basic things such as street sweepers. Sometimes the extent to which European corporations and even governments employ labor-saving devices of all kind seems excessive if not bizarre. However, the non-wage labor costs are so high in Europe that corporations cannot afford to employ the uneducated. This creates a kind of *de facto* minimum wage that, in some cases, can exceed the legal minimum wage. While some large corporations have difficulties finding sufficient apprentices for their businesses, Muslim immigrants, most of the time not even second- or third-generation Muslims, are said to be in many cases simply not qualified for even such entry-level jobs. All the governing elite's claims that these migrants are needed for entry level jobs because of the low birthrates ignore the facts on the ground. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, many Eastern Europeans, including large numbers of Poles and returning Germans from Russia, filled those positions. After the economic crisis in 2008, many Poles returned home where the relatively vibrant economy had no great difficulty absorbing the returnees. Because of excessive minimum wage levels and high non-wage labor costs, the only viable opportunity for under-qualified Muslim immigrants is to

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become self-employed, performing for example courier services and similar low-skill activities for little money.

The upshot is that much of Western Europe has maneuvered itself into a situation where the abdication of its governing authority, be it through the shift of authority to the European Union which in many cases does not seem to be up to the job or the not-so-intentional abdication to alternative authorities in the no-go zones, has raised the potential for conflict to levels not seen since World War II. Historically, the experts have a dismal record of predicting armed conflicts. In early 1914, few predicted there would be a war that would redraw the borders of a significant part of Europe, ending the rule of the Habsburgs and the Romanovs who had ruled their countries for 800 and 300 years respectively. In 1938, travel guides left the reader with no hint of a worldwide conflict of unprecedented proportions. And closer to home, five months before the Berlin Wall came down, no serious person was predicting such an event. The experts are always surprised. The next European conflict could be closer than conventional wisdom expects.

In an interview published December 26, 2015, the head of the Swiss Army, André Blattmann, warned in the *Schweiz am Sonntag* newspaper of a doubling of the risk of unrest due to the fact that the migrant situation adds to weak economic growth, competition in the labor markets, and the burden of additional recipients of welfare payments. He added that social unrest cannot be ruled out. He pointed to an increasingly aggressive use of language among the conflict parties and warns that solidarity, even within nation states, is endangered. Translation: Civil wars are a distinct possibility. The *Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten* website recently reported that this April, there was an exercise taking place in Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia involving European police and military units practicing to put down civil war-like unrest. This follows a similar exercise in 2014. Clearly, European authorities privately are more than worried.

It is impossible to predict where the conflict will break out and who the initial opponents will be. It could start as an insurrection of the general populace against the elites—the rise of the AfD seems to point in that direction. It could be an attack of the general population against migrants in their no-go zones, or vice versa. The German state of Bavaria, whose leadership has been at odds with Chancellor Merkel's policy on the migration issue, could decide that it wants to regain its independence. Historically, it is an anomaly for Bavaria to be ruled from Berlin. With Bavaria being

one of the net contributors to Germany's budget and with disagreements with Berlin rising (especially on the immigration issue), the temptation to return to self-rule cannot be discounted.

There is always tension between recent immigrants and ones who came just before them. The latter fear that the newcomers might underbid them in the job market and drive up the cost of entry-level housing. In Germany, this could mean Turks could join the fight against the more recently arriving Arabs and

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Afghans. It could also mean that recently immigrated Russians of German heritage could engage in a fight with the last wave of Muslim immigrants, even though they have a clear advantage over the new arrivals to the German labor market.

There are similar scenarios in other European countries. Militant French farmers or students could spark a national or international conflict. In Italy, there have been long-standing discussions about the north of the country splitting off from the rest. There was even a plan for Südtirol (Alto Adige), a former Austrian and (since World War I) Italian province, to pay off its share of the Italian debt and become independent. In Spain, Catalonia and the Basque country are just the most well-known regions with separatist movements. There are other separatist movements going on in almost every country on the European continent. Belgium seems to be always just one step away from breaking up. There can be little doubt that the recent deluge of Muslim immigrants has created an explosive situation that could, at almost any instant, erupt into a smaller or larger conflict. It is conceivable that some European countries become a patchwork of territories that looks more like Germany before 1814, or Italy before the 1860s.

Why then would the European governing elites, and especially the German leadership, engage in such a risky business of tolerating or, as in the case of Angela Merkel, at times encouraging this refugee

phenomenon given what's at stake? After all, Germany's *éminence grise* in all things economic, Hans-Werner Sinn, said in a recent interview with *Die Welt* that from an economic perspective, the cost of border patrol agents is only a fraction of the cost of the migrants. There are several reasons. Among the ruling elites and their affluent supporters, there is a feeling of guilt for having amassed so much wealth and security in post-World War II Europe. In Germany, there is also the feeling among the ruling classes and their affluent supporters that Germany needs to amend for the horror the National Socialists inflicted on the whole continent and beyond. Some suggest these affluent citizens are bored and are looking for something that adds meaning to their lives and at the same time alleviates the real or imagined guilt they feel over their affluence and over Germany's past. With this in mind, the migrants look like a means of making amends. By providing shelter—preferably in middle-class or poor neighborhoods—and by giving

migrants government subsidies, these affluent elites alleviate their guilt while burdening middle-class taxpayers. The tragedy is that these actions have helped neither the migrants nor the countries from where they came. The migrants are stuck in an environment that they seemingly are unable to assimilate into. Their countries of origin are left without an element of their population that could bring about change. After all, people who emigrate tend to be those who are comparatively more willing to act for change.

Any solution to this problem would have to start with a halt to Muslim immigration. History shows that governing elites are too often plagued with paralysis, even if they are aware of a pending catastrophe. One just has to read Barbara Tuchman's book *The March of Folly* to see how slim the hope is that government officials have the courage and foresight to avoid a looming disaster—outright civil war. I hope my Austrian friend and I are wrong. ◆