

Europe in the Balance?

Europe faces a breaking point as illegal migration, welfare strain, energy crises, and defense demands collide with shrinking populations and stagnant economies.

By Victor Davis Hanson

Almost weekly in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, and Germany, a sensational assault committed by an illegal migrant—often enjoying some sort of state support or with prior arrests for the same crime—surfaces.

Until recently, European politicians and the media sought to either ignore such news or accuse those who clamored for tighter borders, more police protection, and stiffer penalties of being “racists” or “xenophobes.”

Until recently, that is.

Mass protests are now common in Britain against the Labour Party’s open borders policies and generous welfare entitlements for immigrants who arrive illegally and without authentic “political refugee” status.



Greek officials, also swamped by illegal immigration, now cite President Trump's secure border policies as new models for their own.

The majority of European immigrants now come from majority-Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Yet many arrivals seem angrier at their newfound liberal hosts than at the dictatorships they fled back home.

Europe's immigration policies will not work in a multiethnic democracy.

Too many immigrants are arriving too quickly, without sufficient diversity, language fluency, skills, or familiarity with the customs and culture of their host nations. They often enter with separatist religious and cultural values antithetical to the very place they seek refuge.

Yet, there is no European plan of civic education to assimilate immigrants and teach them the rules, laws, and

culture of their hosts.

It is then no surprise that what follows is ghettoization, resentment, and loud attacks on the very nation in which they seek sanctuary, denouncing it as decadent and godless.

In the past, Europe's anemic military budgets, reliance on borrowed money, socialism, and a once-strong economy papered over these existential challenges of illegal immigration.

Or, as left-wing former chancellor Angela Merkel once inanely said of massive illegal influxes into Germany and Europe, "Wir schaffen das" ("We can do this").

But, of course, Merkel could not.

She offered zero plans on how to integrate, assimilate, and acculturate millions of Europe's illegal aliens. Now, some 15 percent of Germany's population are foreign nationals.

Unfortunately, the statist economies of high-cost Europe are stagnating.

Massive welfare outlays, coupled with a shrinking and aging native population—with a birth rate sinking below 1.4—are finally slowing economic growth.

Current German Chancellor Friedrich Merz put the dilemma bluntly: "The welfare state as we have it today can no longer be financed with what we can economically afford."

Yet the more socialism ossifies, the more popular culture still demands free benefits that a shrinking number of taxpayers can no longer provide.

The United States is finally taking the opposite approach of cracking down on illegal immigration, deregulating the economy, and unleashing high technology to fast-track new frontiers of artificial intelligence, robotics, cryptocurrency, and genetic engineering.

Often, Europe's best and brightest—and frustrated—are migrating to greater opportunities and freedom in the U.S., further hampering European research and development.

Europe foolishly adopted a self-defeating energy policy to achieve net-zero emissions by subsidizing inefficient wind and solar power while ignoring or shutting down far cheaper natural gas, nuclear, and coal-powered electrical generation.

Meanwhile, China, grinning like a Cheshire cat and caring little about its carbon footprint, is eagerly exporting wind and solar systems to the suicidal West.

Yet China itself is busy building about two massive coal-fired plants a month, and the largest and most environmentally disruptive hydroelectric projects in the world.

No wonder average European electricity costs are even steeper than those in failing California. European consumers often cannot afford to turn their heaters and air conditioners on, while businesses cannot compete with industries abroad that enjoy far cheaper power.

Donald Trump has declared that the 80-year postwar order is calcified and that the US will no longer run huge trading deficits with European Union nations. Instead, it will demand symmetrical tariffs, further challenging past European mercantile profitability.

The days of Europe disarming and relying on the United States for defense are also over, given that Vladimir Putin, for the third time in 15 years, invaded a neighboring country.

Yet Ukraine is not Chechnya or Georgia, but instead on the doorstep of Europe.

So in panic, a perennially delinquent NATO is not only promising to spend the required 2 percent of GDP on defense but also increasing arms budgets to 5 percent of GDP, a higher

rate even than that of the US.

No one knows how Europeans will afford such massive rearmament.

To do so would require opening up their economies, adopting far more flexible and traditional energy policies, securing their borders, ending illegal immigration, pruning the welfare state, increasing their fertility rates, and dropping the DEI salad bowl while re-embracing the melting pot of integration and acculturation.

We will soon see whether Europeans can adopt such needed reforms, or find the necessary medicine worse than their current crippling continental disease.

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