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Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats**

**“Mass Migration in Europe: The Problems of Assimilation, Integration, and Security
and Their Portents for the Future”**

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Mr. Chairman Rohrabacher, Ranking Member Meeks, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify before the House Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats on the important and timely topic of migration into Europe. I will be speaking in my own name, and the opinions expressed in my testimony should not be understood as reflecting the views of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

As we have seen from the reports and images of the rescues in the Mediterranean, the European migration crisis has a compelling humanitarian dimension. However, the migration crisis has also brought out concerns pertaining to Europe’s security and stability, which are the main topics discussed in this hearing, and to which I will limit my comments. I will share my general thoughts on the European migration crisis and its management, including how the 2015 migration crisis has contributed to the current divisions within Europe, thereby weakening the key partner of the United States.

In 2015, Europe saw its biggest migration crisis since the end of World War II, when the international agencies recorded over one million irregular arrivals across the Mediterranean.¹ Without consulting with other European leaders, in the summer of 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel waived the EU Dublin rules that require the asylum seekers to apply in the country of their first arrival (i.e., Greece). Germany’s humanitarian gesture acted as a pull factor for the Syrians facing dim prospects in the refugee camps in the Middle East. Africans and Asians joined the migration rush to make it to Europe before Germany would close its borders again. The crisis peaked in the fall, with more than 221,000 sea arrivals in the month of October alone. That figure is higher than all the arrivals for the entire preceding year, 2014.²

Let me clarify here that, given the mixed nature of the migratory flows, I use the term “migration” and “migrants” as a general term to refer to all those on the move, including refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular economic migrants in search of opportunities.

Most migrants came through the so-called West Balkans Route leading from Greece. With the recent memories of war and still unresolved neighborly disputes, the small Balkan states were often in disagreement how to manage several thousands of new arrivals on a daily basis. Wishing to slow down the migratory influx, Croatia temporarily closed the border crossings with Serbia; Belgrade immediately accused Zagreb of fascism for keeping migrants out. Slovenia built a razor-wire barrier to prevent migrants’ irregular crossings from Croatia; Zagreb protested that Ljubljana had raised the fence on Croatia’s territory. With population of 4.2 million, Croatia had to process more than 552,000 arrivals in

a few months, before the end of 2015.³ Austria, which was coping with 11,000 new arrivals daily, wanted to send them off to Germany, but Bavaria claimed it could not process more than 50 arrivals per hour.⁴

Germany expected that her southern neighbors, particularly wealthy Austria and Slovenia, would take in some asylum seekers, rather than simply waive them through to Bavaria. However, Germany's neighbors in the South and the East resented Berlin's policy of open borders: the German Chancellor opened Germany to asylum seekers and thereby made the decision that affected the states on the West Balkans Route without consulting these states first. A number of EU states, Germany included, introduced border controls in the Schengen Zone, the area that should be free of such controls to speed up the flow of people and goods across the EU's internal borders.

The mass migration inflows overwhelmed the asylum and social services, leading to housing shortages, budgetary concerns, and political divisions in the countries of destination. Virtually unvetted, the mixed migratory influx posed security risks, allowing radicalized elements to slip into Europe undetected. Some of the attackers responsible for the multiple Paris attacks in November 2015 passed through the temporary refugee shelters in the Balkans. The Paris attacks, for which the Islamic State claimed responsibility, came during the height of the 2015 migration crisis and brought into question the policies of open borders, which allowed the masses of unvetted migrants to reach the heart of Europe.

In March 2016, the European Union reached an agreement with Ankara, which allowed for the return of irregular migrants back to Turkey. In addition, NATO began supporting Frontex, the European Border and Coastguard Agency, with intelligence and surveillance, thereby helping disrupt the criminal networks engaged in smuggling and trafficking in the Mediterranean. With the Balkans Route officially closed, the irregular sea arrivals through Greece and the Balkans declined considerably, but the arrivals increased on other migratory paths across the Mediterranean, leading to Spain and Italy. The irregular sea arrivals to Italy and Spain originate in the countries of North and Sub-Saharan Africa, while the top origin countries for the Greece arrivals are Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.⁵ The top destination countries have been Germany, Sweden, and other wealthy democracies with generous benefits for asylum seekers.

In 2018, there have been less than 20,000 irregular arrivals along all the routes, with an estimate of 522 migrants dead or missing.⁶ The majority of the arrivals are now from Africa. The top origin countries for the irregular sea arrivals are Syria (11%) and Nigeria (10%), followed by Guinea, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Iraq, Bangladesh, Gambia, Eritrea, and Algeria, with men representing 68% of the total arrivals.⁷

To limit the "pull factor" that attracts migrants to Europe, the top destination countries, including Germany and Sweden, introduced restrictive policies, such as curtailing the rights of family reunification. Meanwhile, the EU started applying conditionality to the agreements on the visa regimes and development aid, in order to pressure the countries of origin and transit to restrict migratory flows, host migrant populations, and accept the repatriation of their nationals who are rejected asylum seekers. Furthermore, the EU is working on setting up some limited pathways for safe, legal migration into Europe, and on reforming its asylum system.

European leaders worry about Africa, where a third of the world's youth will live by 2050, and where the economic development never seems to catch up with its demographic growth. Europe is concerned about the "youth bulge" in Africa, where a lack of economic opportunity could lead to

increased protests, radicalization, and migratory pressures against Europe.⁸ Some also believe that the climate change will produce mass migration waves in future.

It has not been easy for the EU to take restrictive measures to contain migration because the EU prides itself on being a community built on the rule of law, and committed to democracy and human rights. However, given the potentially large numbers of asylum seekers, Europe cannot accept all those who want to come. The EU leaders also believe that, in taking practical approaches to limit migration, they have been containing the rise of the populist and far-right parties at home, and thereby saving liberal democracy in Europe.

Because of the migration crisis, the anti-establishment and Eurosceptic parties have gained ground in Europe and won important victories in the recent European elections, including in Austria, Italy, and Germany. With its migration policy, Chancellor Merkel took its centrist conservative party to the left, and some of her supporters defected to the far right Alternative for Germany (AfD). In the last German elections, AfD won 13 percent of the national vote, creating difficulties for Chancellor Merkel to form the coalition government.

The German Chancellor now must be careful when pursuing certain policies for fear of triggering the opposition criticism. When the United States, joined by France and United Kingdom, launched strikes against Syria, the German Chancellor said the action was appropriate, but did not join the allies in taking the action due to the opposition at home. In other words, the migration crisis has left the German Chancellor weakened. The migration crisis is changing the nature of politics in Europe, and there may be consequences for the Euro-Atlantic partnership.

Russia has also supported some far-right politicians in Europe, possibly for ideological reasons, for Russia considers the far-right movements as part of the global fight against Islamic terrorism.⁹ However, Russia also wants to exploit divisions and weaken Europe.

Furthermore, European leaders are beginning to worry about the possibility of devastating far-right attacks, which could potentially radicalize Muslims, provoke more attacks by radicalized immigrants and far right groups, and lead to the breakdown of law and order.¹⁰

Migration has become a big source of contention in Europe, particularly between the new democracies in the East, and their Western counterparts. The Gallup World Poll shows that the EU is highly divided in attitudes towards migrants. Out of the maximum possible score of 9 on the migrant acceptance index, the average index is 6.73 for Western EU member states, and 2.77 for Central and Eastern Europe.¹¹

In September 2015, just as the migration crisis was developing, the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted, by qualified majority, two decisions on relocating 160,000 asylum seekers from the frontier states Greece and Italy to other EU member states.¹² However, the Visegrad 4 countries (V4)—Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland—have remained opposed to the obligatory quotas for relocating migrants, arguing that such matters should be at the discretion of the national governments. The V4 countries want the EU to protect its outside borders and prevent migratory pressures, rather than distribute the asylum seekers. Meanwhile, Germany and Western European states insist on the humanitarian principles and the importance of solidarity and burden sharing in the EU. The EU Court of Justice upheld the mandatory quotas for relocating asylum seekers within the EU.

Nevertheless, despite the Court's decision and the European Commission's threats to sanction the members that fail to take in the refugees, the V4 countries have remained defiant. The V4 countries now risk losing the EU funds if they do not accept obligatory quotas for migrants' distribution in the EU. The relations also worsened because the conservative, nationalist governments in Hungary and Poland began curtailing the independence of courts and the media. Some EU politicians have urged using the "nuclear option" against Poland and Hungary: the Article 7 infringement procedures for violating the EU's fundamental values could deprive Poland and Hungary of their voting rights.

The V4, like the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, are young democracies. To join the liberal Europe, Eastern and Central European countries went through a period of intensive economic and political reforms, resulting in benefits for their countries overall, but not the benefits distributed equally throughout the respective societies. Therefore, they are vulnerable to the public pressures and populism. Furthermore, it is easier for the new democracies to backslide on the rule of law, as opposed to the established democracies in the West, with long histories of the rule of law and democratic institutions. Furthermore, unlike Western Europe, East Europeans were under the Soviet control, with their freedoms and sovereignty repressed. Therefore, Central and Eastern European countries are more nationalist and concerned about maintaining their sovereignty. They have not had colonies in Africa and Asia, and do not feel the same urgency about helping developing countries as their Western counterparts do.

The V4 are wrong in refusing to participate in the redistribution of migrants from Greece and Italy. However, their opposition also raises some points that Western European democracies should address. Namely, most of the migrants come from the developing countries with Muslim majorities, and much of the opposition in the V4 countries stems from seeing the difficulties that their Western counterparts have had with the homegrown terrorism and with integrating Muslim minorities in their countries. Moreover, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey, 40 % of European citizens believe that the integration of immigrants has not been successful; 38% believe that the immigration originating outside the EU is more of a problem than an opportunity, while 31% see it as equally a problem and an opportunity.¹³

According to the Pew Research Center, the V4 countries have few Muslim minorities, less than 0.5% of the total population in the respective countries. Many of the Western European countries generally have higher percentages of the Muslim minorities, above 6%, while France and Sweden have most, 8.8% and 8.1%, respectively. The size of the Muslim population in Europe could more than double by 2050, due to birth rates and immigration.¹⁴

The strength of the immigrant communities matters because of the tensions inherent in liberal democracies when minorities demand collective, rather than individual, rights. The larger, concentrated minorities insist on their autonomy, and the liberal democracies today embrace toleration and rarely interfere with the cultural practices of the immigrant communities. Pushed to the extreme, toleration in the liberal, multicultural societies usually leads to "the politics of indifference," which in turn can lead to the setting up, in the liberal Western countries, of parallel societies that sometimes embrace illiberal practices, such as forced marriages or the female genital mutilation. Multicultural societies thereby can abandon liberal multiculturalism and become pluralist multicultural societies that lack cohesion and tolerate the illiberal next to the liberal values.

The preferred alternative to pluralist multiculturalism or pluriculturalism sketched above is liberal multiculturalism. The latter assures social cohesion (i.e., diversity in unity), balances minority

rights with individual rights, and requires an engaged state rather than the politics of indifference. In this model, minority rights and cultural diversity are interpreted within the liberal-democratic framework.¹⁵

However, liberal democracies today--in fact, post-liberal states in a crisis--feel uncomfortable being assertive and requiring minorities to embrace the values of the majority cultures.

Assimilation has traditionally been a factor of stability in diverse societies; it has led to the complete dissolution of immigrant identities and their immersion into the respective dominant cultures and societies. However, with the greater awareness of minority rights and globalization, liberal democracies have abandoned assimilation and embraced multiculturalism.

The question today is whether the democracies will insist on maintaining multiculturalism within the liberal democratic framework, which also means placing demands on minorities to integrate and accept the values of the dominant cultures in the liberal democratic societies. Or will democracies opt for the politics of indifference and thus end up accepting the parallel societies under a multicultural pluralist or pluricultural model, which generally results in minorities' having weaker loyalties and ties to the mainstream host societies.

Establishing parallel societies can weaken the participation of minorities in the mainstream society and increase their vulnerability to radicalization. The danger of pluriculturalism is also that the majorities will begin to reject multiculturalism and revert to nationalism, as we are now witnessing in some European societies that have not had a good experience in integrating Muslim minorities, have accepted many refugees in the recent years, and where the far right parties are now on the rise.

Migration will not stop entirely, and Europe needs some migrants because its population, including labor force, is on decline. This situation also calls for stronger integration policies to ensure the inclusion of the new arrivals and the cohesion of the respective societies in Europe.

The size of a migratory influx matters: European democracies will need to limit migration in order to facilitate integration. For example, even big, wealthy Germany has had difficulty in absorbing the large migration wave that came in 2015. Chancellor Merkel has recently announced that, at this time, no Jewish school, kindergarten, or synagogue can be without police protection in Germany.¹⁶ While Anti-Semitism has existed in Germany and Europe prior to the migration crisis, the large influxes of Arab immigrants have led to the increased attacks on the Jewish minorities in Europe. It will take some time to educate new arrivals and see them accept the core German values, including the responsibility for the Holocaust and the importance of the good relationship with Israel.

The European migration crisis is a complex crisis that requires, besides a humanitarian response, economic and political measures in the countries of origin, cooperation with the countries of transit, enforced security of the borders, and the integration of the new arrivals in the host countries. It requires much money, and much international cooperation.

The United States is already helping and can help furthermore in several ways.

First, the United States and NATO should continue disrupting the smuggling and trafficking across the Mediterranean, thereby helping protect European borders. The United States must also insist that Europe protects its borders.

Second, there should be no repetition of the migration crisis of 2015, when a million migrants, virtually unvetted, made it into the heart of Europe. Besides posing security risks, the migration influx was destabilizing the states in the Western Balkans and South East Europe. The United States should insist that such crises are also security challenges that impinge on the transatlantic partnership and the security of the United States, rather than allow some European powers to view the migration challenges as humanitarian emergencies only, which was the case in Europe in 2015.

Third, the migration crisis may be out of the headlines right now, but possibly even bigger challenges are looming in Europe's broader neighborhood, in particular Africa and the Middle East. Managing these global challenges will require international cooperation of which the United States should be a part. The looming challenges will not only require a humanitarian response, but also development policies, targeted aid, conditionality to urge reforms in African states and negotiate readmission agreements, and cooperation with countries of origin and transit to manage migration.

Fourth, it is also possible that the management of future challenges in Europe's neighborhood will require the use of military force, and that Europeans will have to rely on the United States. However, as we have seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria—the top origin countries for asylum seekers in Europe—we have not had the best experiences when it comes to the use of force or calls for revolution to depose dictators in divided societies lacking the institutions and societal reconciliation. We need to take preventative actions now and demand gradual reforms, using conditionality to extract cooperation, and urging reconciliation to shore up fragile societies, with hope of preventing major breakdowns in future.

Fifth, the United States should urge Europeans to put their differences aside. Eastern Europeans look up to the United States of America, and we should urge them to end their present quarrels with their Western counterparts. Eastern Europeans should embrace solidarity and accept the need to shape the common asylum policies in Europe. Western Europeans need to stop talking down to Eastern Europeans and be ready to examine their failing integration policies at home.

In fact, European migration policy should not be either/or, with some demanding border security, and others demanding solidarity and refugee redistribution across Europe. Instead, both should be part of the migration management, which also helps keep Europe liberal. The migration has been changing the politics in Europe and therefore will be having consequences for the transatlantic relationship.

I believe that the EU will muster strength to overcome the current challenges, because any alternatives would be worse. The breakup of the EU would be a calamity for Eastern Europe, a disaster for Europe as a whole, and bad for the United States. A weak or broken Europe would not be able to integrate the West Balkans, which remains unstable. The Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks (Muslims) disagree on almost everything except one thing: they all want to join the EU. The EU membership would also shift Bosnia's decision-making to the European level, away from the paralysis in the Bosnia institutions. The European integration process offers hope for the still unstable Balkans.

In conclusion, the present political divisions are bad for Europe and for the United States. They also play into the hands of Russia, which wants to see a weaker, divided Europe, and extend its influence in the region. A disunited Europe means a weak partner for the United States.

Thank you.

NOTES

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- ⁸ Valerie Arnould and Francesco Strazzari, *African Futures: Horizon 2025*, Issue Report No. 37 (September 2017), (Paris: EU Institute for International Security, 2017), pp. 19-23, available from https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Report_37_African%20futures_0.pdf, accessed April 24, 2018.
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- ¹⁵ For a discussion of assimilation, integration, liberalism, and multiculturalism, including liberal and pluralist multiculturalism, in political philosophy, see Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Sarah Song, “Multiculturalism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 ed.), ed. Edward N. Zalta, available from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/multiculturalism/>, accessed April 24, 2018.
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