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# Europe's Rising Tide of Immigration Hysteria (<https://www.syndicationbureau.com/europes-rising-tide-of-immigration-hysteria/>)

Jonathan Gornall (<https://www.syndicationbureau.com/author/jonathan-gornall/>)



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In The Netherlands, a formerly fringe far-right party wins more seats in the Dutch general election (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67504272>) than any other political group.

In Dublin, a knife attack outside a school triggers rioting and looting (<https://www.rte.ie/news/dublin/2023/1123/1418216-protests/>) by right-wing thugs.

In the UK, the latest YouGov poll reveals rising support (<https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/47944-voting-intention-con-25-lab-44-22-23-nov-2023>) for the right-wing Reform party.

The common theme in each of these recent news stories is immigration, a topic that has risen to the top of political agendas across Europe, threatening to transform liberal democracies into illiberal bastions of intolerance.

Make no mistake. This isn't about "illegal" immigration. It is about racism, pure and simple.

For instance, it suits the UK government to make an issue out of "stopping the boats (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-the-stop-the-boats-bill-7-march-2023>)" crossing the English Channel.

But the numbers involved (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67506641>) are tiny compared with the number of migrants coming to the UK legally (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67506641>), to work as doctors, nurses and care-home assistants, or to study as students.

And even those students are coming under fire.

The UK is seeing a record number of students (<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/universities-uk-international/explore-uuki/international-student-recruitment/international-student-recruitment-data>) coming from overseas to study. Worth millions to universities, which charge foreign students far higher fees than their British counterparts, they contribute significantly (<https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2023/05/16/international-students-boost-uk-economy-by-41-9-billion/>) to the nation's GDP.

Some stay on in the country after completing their course. If they do, it's because they've got a job and are paying taxes to the treasury.

Regardless, right-wing politicians are now demanding that such students should not be allowed to bring family (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-65683046>) to live with them.

Europe is walking, eyes tight shut, into a new dark age that makes a mockery of the 70-million-plus lives lost during the Second World War in the effort to rid the world of the cancerous, supremacist ideology of the Nazis.

A fundamental misunderstanding underpins Europe's rising tide of immigration hysteria: Europe, with birth rates declining, needs immigration.

In the UK in particular, migrants form a large part of the workforce, including doctors and nurses, but also carry out many of the low-paid jobs.

But at the same time, right-wing politicians are peddling the false trope that migrants are taking “our” jobs and housing, clogging up “our” health system and – most sinister of all – “changing the shape of our country before our very eyes.”

That last incendiary quote comes from Richard Tice, a wealthy British property developer who founded the UK Brexit party and is now the leader of its successor Reform party, which says Britain is “broken” and “needs net zero immigration.”

The Conservative government, he said, had “totally betrayed (<https://twitter.com/BBCr4today/status/1727950896846225492>)” the British people because immigration to the UK was at a record high.

It is, but only because if it wasn't, Britain's economy would collapse.

Regardless, traditional, more reasonable political parties across Europe are in a bind. If they ignore the rising tide of racist hysteria, they will be swept away, and so they are pandering to the mob.

In the UK, the Conservative government is fragmenting, torn apart by the competing narratives of the beleaguered party's few remaining centrist MPs, and the extremists like the recently sacked Home Secretary Suella Braverman, architect of the bizarre policy of dispatching boat people to Rwanda (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-61782866>).

In The Netherlands, a four-party coalition government collapsed in July after failing to reach agreement over measures to control the flow of migrants.

Into the moral vacuum stepped radical right-winger Geert Wilders (<https://apnews.com/article/netherlands-wilders-profile-election-9da8ea7defb91f892868995cab333fcf>), a preposterous man who rants about the “tsunami of asylum and immigration” and who has pledged to “ban” the Quran, close the country's borders and deliver “Nexit,” a Dutch version of Brexit.

On one level, this growing distaste for non-European foreigners is hilarious, given that it is a direct consequence of the colonialism that European states such as the UK, and Holland imposed on the world for centuries.

But such truths cast no shadows on the fantasy landscapes occupied by the likes of Wilders.

The advantages of cultural diversity are obvious, and too numerous to list, and in choosing to present multiculturalism as a threat rather than an asset, right-wing politicians expose themselves for what they are – racists.

In Ireland last week, anti-migrant mobs gathered following an incident in which five people,

including a five-year-old girl, were stabbed outside a primary school in Dublin.

In the words of the police, “hateful assumptions” that the attacker was a foreign national spread quickly, and mobs took to the streets, expressing their disdain for foreigners by, oddly, vandalizing and looting Irish shops.

Ironically, the man who risked his own life (<https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/2023/11/24/i-used-my-helmet-as-a-weapon-to-stop-him-brazilian-deliveroo-rider-intervened-in-knife-attack-at-school-on-parnell-square>

[/#:~:text=After%20his%20restaurant%20burned%20down,l%20go%20there%20often.](#)) to save the wounded victims, was himself a migrant, a fast-food courier and a father of two, originally from Brazil.

Unfortunately, Europe is increasingly under the spell of those who would highlight our differences rather than our similarities, in a cynical bid to seize power.

The roots of all the disruptions in the Middle East and North Africa that have, to a significant extent, contributed to Europe's migrant problems, can be traced to European intervention in the region dating back to the First World War.

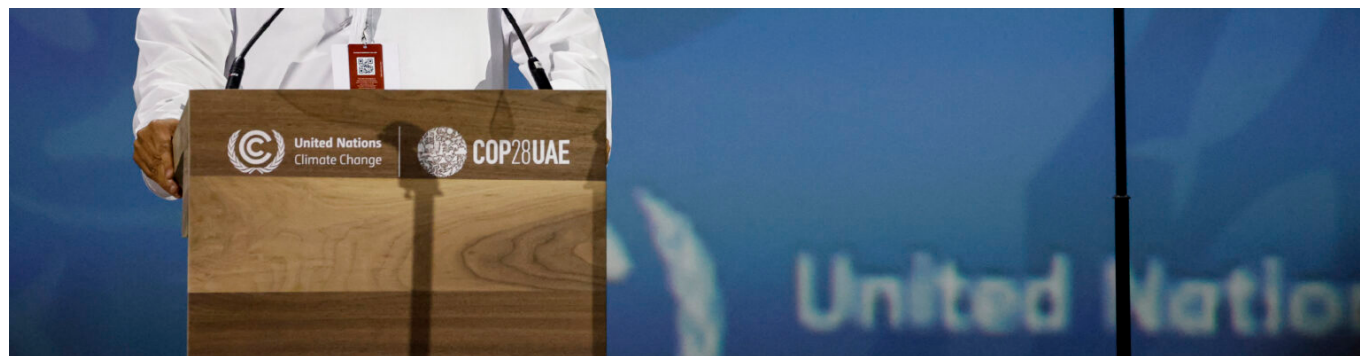
The challenge now for Europe's moderate, mainstream politicians, is to recognize and own this history, to hold the line of decency and to combat, rather than pander to, the false narratives of the extremists.

So far, however, none has appeared capable of rising to this challenge, and Europe is slipping inexorably into a moral dark age.

*Jonathan Gornall is a British journalist, formerly with The Times, who has lived and worked in the Middle East and is now based in the UK.*

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