

MARCH 2022

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A Journal of Contemporary World Affairs



EUROPE

Policy Ambiguities

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Plus:

The New Face of Terrorism

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COMING IN APRIL

South Asia

TWENTY YEARS AGO, intercommunal riots in India's western state of Gujarat left more than 1,000 people dead, mostly Muslims, in what was widely described as a pogrom. The state government, led at the time by Narendra Modi, did little to stop the violence. Since Modi became India's prime minister in 2014, his party's Hindu nationalist ideology has taken an increasingly hostile stance toward minorities. How much remains of the multicultural fabric of Indian democracy? *Current History's* April issue will address that question and more trends across the region. Topics scheduled to appear include:

- **Everyday Interfaith Relations in India**
Atreyee Sen, University of Copenhagen
- **The Struggles of Indian Women with Disabilities**
Renu Addlakha, Centre for Women's Development Studies
Eighth in a series
- **Bangladesh's Pandemic Response and the Poor**
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- **Precarious Karachi**
Nichola Khan, University of Brighton

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“[G]rowing levels of wealth inequality further perpetuate housing challenges for most people.”

The Pandemic Worsens Europe’s Housing Problems

LINDSAY B. FLYNN

Housing is a flash point in many European countries, with protests erupting and citizens voting to wrench properties from big investors. This is not just, or even primarily, about housing booms and busts, but about fundamental questions regarding how to order society. Housing-generated inequality creates a conundrum for governments that must balance the interests of competing constituencies against a complex housing market that cannot be fully controlled.

Inequality is fueling the explosive nature of the debate. Since Europe now provides less social (public) housing for the poor than it had historically, lower-income households must compete for housing in the private rental market. Middle-income households, especially those of younger generations, also find themselves locked out of homeownership and facing a difficult rental market. Increasingly, they remain in or boomerang back to their parental homes. At the same time, high-income households, or those who were fortunate enough to buy at the right time or in the right town, have used the increasing value of their homes to further consolidate their privileged economic positions. In other words, households across the income distribution face very different kinds of challenges and opportunities in today’s unequal housing markets.

All of this has been unfolding in the period since the 2008 housing crash, when an opportunity to address increasingly unaffordable housing presented itself but was not seized. The consequences of inaction have become tragically apparent during

the COVID-19 pandemic. Inequality is in part to blame, both because governments have failed to rein in powerful actors in finance and other industries, and because so many households have tied their livelihoods to their homes through housing equity. Inequality is, of course, not the only reason for unaffordable housing—housing markets are large and complex enough that no silver bullet exists to solve the problem. But understanding how the current housing crisis is driven by the politics of inequality will help us appreciate the rocky path ahead for current and future generations.

FEWER PLACES FOR THE POOR

The housing crisis can be felt at all income levels, but nowhere more acutely than at the bottom of the income distribution. European countries have a long history of providing social housing for those who lack the economic wherewithal to secure homes on the private market. Some countries, like the Netherlands, have extended eligibility well into the middle class. But just about everywhere, provision of social housing has declined since the mid-1970s.

At the same time, need and eligibility for social housing have increased, fueled by increasing income inequality, expensive housing markets, and a near-fanatical view that owning is superior to renting. For the poor, this prompts economic hardship, frustration, and long wait lists for diminished social housing stock. Those forced to seek housing in the private rental market face precarity without the subsidy inherent in social housing. Such precarious positions mean that even minimal financial disruptions can force poor families into subpar or temporary living arrangements, or even homelessness.

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The mismatch between eligibility and availability points to fundamentally political questions about how people threatened by housing insecurity should be housed. Were governments wrong to prioritize private rental and ownership markets over social housing? And why did they decide to do so?

The common answer in the United States is that public housing, and especially the high-rise “project”-based housing constructed in the post-war era, failed. Think of infamous examples like the Cabrini Green complex in Chicago or Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, both of which were demolished with spectacular implosions that punctuated their presumed failure. Yet this answer is not only incomplete, but adopts a sensationalizing narrative that perpetuates racial and class stereotyping. Newspapers in the decade leading up to the Cabrini-Green demolitions emphasized the “notorious” reputation of public housing as irredeemable breeding grounds of crime and poverty, doing a disservice to residents who were faced with a series of policy and political failures that translated to harsh living conditions on the ground. The repudiation of project-based housing corresponded with a governmental shift to more market-based approaches, such as shifting the scope of Section 8 housing vouchers exclusively to private rental units, or promoting mixed-income housing developments through the Hope VI program.

Some European states also experimented with the high-rise approach, with similarly sensationalized results, such as the towering *habitations à loyer modéré* (HLMs or moderate-rent housing) in the Paris banlieues, which sometimes cordoned off immigrants of minority religious and ethnic descent into low-income neighborhoods where they had little chance of upward mobility. In general, though, a greater emphasis on social solidarity took Europe down a different path.

Taking a longer view, social housing built in some of Europe’s biggest cities in the early twentieth century effectively improved on the dense, unsanitary, and unsafe housing haphazardly constructed during the industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth century. In this way, social housing—regularly promoted by national legislation and built by local authorities and other public-facing entities—was the solution to the poor and overcrowded housing previously built

by private industrialists. One need look no further than the urban renewal initiatives undertaken by the left-leaning Social Democrats in “Red Vienna” after World War I, when overcrowded urban housing was upgraded via hundreds of publicly built housing complexes across the city.

A second upgrading occurred after World War II. Major cities across Europe expanded social rental stock as they rebuilt bombed-out cities, such as London. Housing was seen as a national priority, and governments took an active role in its provision for the following three decades.

Throughout Europe, a reversal came with the economic crises of the 1970s, the retrenchment of the welfare state in the 1980s, and the rise of neoliberalism to varying degrees in different countries. The pace at which social housing was built or replaced slowed. As a result, on balance, the stock of available units contracted, reinforcing inequality—and often defining social housing as a stigmatized form of welfare support.

In the notable case of the United Kingdom, new statutory regulations in 1980 afforded social housing tenants the choice to purchase their units on very favorable terms. Touted as “Right to Buy” and embraced as one of the first priorities of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s government, this policy cleverly played on the ideal of equality. Why, after all, should social housing tenants not have the opportunity to become homeowners and enjoy the benefits of private property? Yet a more equal chance of ownership then meant unequal chances of social renting for future generations. In short, the right to buy decreased the social housing stock by effectively privatizing public housing.

Because social housing stock has declined everywhere, renters now struggle to find affordable housing. Even in countries with still-generous welfare states like Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, over a third of households in the bottom fifth of earners are housing-overburdened, meaning that they spend more than 40 percent of their income on housing costs. In the UK and Luxembourg, the rate is even higher: 40 percent of the bottom fifth by income is housing-overburdened.

Subsidized rental housing aims to alleviate these burdens on the poor. In the UK, social housing tenants are only half as likely to be

*The current housing crisis is driven
by the politics of inequality.*

housing-overburdened as private market tenants. But given the mismatch between social housing stock and need, many low-income households are left to seek housing on the private market, where the gap between them and those higher up in the income distribution drives up rents.

HOUSING INSECURITY

Since most governments have prioritized homeownership over renting, low and middle earners also compete for the small share of owned housing for which they can qualify for a mortgage. This creates any number of lose-lose situations for households that extend well into the middle class.

Fierce competition for scarce housing units thus plays out within both private rental and ownership markets. Almost everywhere, the private rental market is smaller than the homeownership market. Yet over the course of a lifetime, nearly everybody rents before purchasing a home. Rental prices in the European Union rose between 2010 and 2021 in every member state but two, on the whole increasing 15 percent. House prices saw an even larger increase. After falling or remaining stable after the 2008 crisis until 2015, they ultimately surged by 31 percent across the EU.

One might think that rising housing prices automatically translate into increased unaffordability, but that is not always true. In fact, the share of disposable income spent on housing across all households declined in most of Europe after the 2008 housing crash, hovering around 20 percent. As a general rule, banks will not approve mortgages unless payments amount to less than 30 percent of income. From this perspective, it seems that the increase in housing prices has been far from catastrophic.

Aggregate numbers, however, often hide important inequalities, and this is no exception. Spending a greater share of income on housing is more challenging for those with lower incomes, and they consistently do so. Across the EU, those at risk of poverty pay more than twice as much of their income on housing as those not at risk.

Some groups are especially burdened. Single people under 65 who are at risk of poverty spend well over half of their income on housing. This is far above the borrowing threshold; banks will refuse to approve loans with such a high mortgage-to-income ratio. Spending that much on rent also precludes any meaningful strategy to save for a down payment. In other words, the relentless increase in housing costs has created an especially

dire situation for those who likely do not qualify for social housing but cannot easily navigate the private rental and ownership markets.

THE MIDDLE-CLASS SQUEEZE

What about those more squarely in the middle class—how do they fare? While housing costs are still often a burden across this group, younger households looking to buy at or after the height of the pre-2008 housing bubble have had an especially difficult time. Young people who bought homes in the years leading up to the 2008 housing crash found themselves with negative equity. Those who were thinking about buying after the crash encountered strict lending requirements, fiscal austerity, and weak labor markets. Contrast this generation's situation with that of their grandparents, who benefited from postwar rebuilding efforts, or their parents, who benefited from the long increase in home values over the 1990s and, at least from a home equity perspective, found the housing crash easier to weather.

It is no wonder that we observe generational fault lines in the housing market. People born in the 1980s experienced a once-in-a-lifetime housing market crash and financial crisis in their twenties and a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic and financial crisis in their thirties. This resulted in lower homeownership rates for young people in particular: countries with very different mortgage markets, like Greece, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, all experienced more than a 10 percent decrease in homeownership rates for the under-35 demographic in the decade after the height of the housing bubble. It also seems that, even though this trend varies across Europe, those who did manage to buy sometimes did so by purchasing lower-quality housing, farther away from services.

What is more, whereas previous generations could become homeowners with only one breadwinner in the family, homeownership today often requires two earners and a significant share of their total income. Housing stock itself is slow to change, and much of it is not conducive to balancing the challenges that two-earner households face when trying to secure housing close to two jobs, with the amenities important for parents.

The United States is not the only place where larger, more family-friendly housing is farther from the cities and jobs. This distance makes it particularly difficult for women in younger generations, who still bear more of the child-rearing responsibilities, to reconcile work and family. But

the fact that contemporary housing markets are not gender-neutral is sometimes overlooked, since the housing affordability crisis looms so large.

Those who have not managed to buy have very different living arrangements than previous generations. A nontrivial number of young people remain in their parents' homes well into adulthood, or share apartments with roommates even after they have entered the labor market. The housing crash may have amplified this trend, but it did not cause it. Housing-driven delays in important milestones like leaving the parental home, partnering, and buying a home have been lengthening for at least the past two decades.

The inter-crisis years between the housing crash and the pandemic also found younger people traversing increasingly different paths, based on their own economic resources and the resources of their parents. In many cases, these are not generational conflicts at all, but a complicated dance of cooperation within family units that spans generations. For example, the millennials who can purchase a home typically have parents or grandparents who can contribute the down payment. Poorer peers paying high rents can never muster the resources for that step into homeownership. The consequence is an increasingly fractured younger generation.

*Were governments wrong to
prioritize private markets over
social housing?*

GREATER RISKS, LESS RISK SHARING

We might like to think that the housing market is predictably unpredictable, but given the trends since the 2008 crash, it is hardly surprising that COVID-19 magnified already existing housing challenges among low- and middle-income earners. Yet the news is not all bad, at least in Europe. A number of emergency measures, in both employment and housing markets, and at both the country and EU levels, mediated a situation that could have been much worse.

Unlike the United States, which relied on expanded unemployment aid to offset job losses at the onset of the pandemic, Europe followed the German model of paying for furloughs or short-time work through large social safety-net programs. In addition, the EU lifted fiscal-discipline enforcement mechanisms like national debt and budget deficit limits, and launched loan programs to supplement member states' emergency work schemes.

The upside of this strategy is less job churn, and thus a greater ability to pay the rent—unemployment rates in the eurozone stayed under 9 percent, compared with a peak of nearly 15 percent in the United States. These programs did not prevent all economic pain, especially for those who relied on the gig or black economies, those who worked fewer hours, or those who lost their jobs completely. A recent estimate indicates that 7 million jobs were either lost or not created in the EU between 2019 and 2022.

Because housing costs have become one of the largest parts of so many households' budgets, there is a bright-line relationship between lost wages and housing burden. In response to this burden, many governments quickly adopted country-level emergency housing measures, like eviction moratoriums, mortgage relief, and occasionally rent freezes and subsidies to landlords. Spain, for instance, combined all four. An eviction ban suspended 90 percent of planned evictions in Barcelona in the initial months of 2021. Landlords could request compensation when the ban applied to

their property. Renters having difficulty paying their rent could request a 50 percent reduction or a postponement of their payment. Another policy enabled burdened homeowners to postpone their mortgage pay-

ments without accruing additional interest on their loans.

Although some emergency housing measures, like the eviction ban in Spain, continue to protect the most vulnerable, many of these measures across Europe have expired. Even while at full force, they did not spare everyone. Such measures had an especially tall order to fill due to the nature of the COVID-19 crisis. Stay-at-home orders designed to stem the tide of the pandemic worked only for those who had a home to go to that was safe and spacious enough to accommodate everyone, and for people who could do their work from home or have their lost wages replaced.

The pandemic amplified the already heightened health risks of people sleeping rough, in shelters, or at the homes of family or friends. Homelessness had reached record numbers across almost all EU member states in the pre-pandemic years, in part because of increasing evictions. In the heart of the EU, the Brussels capital region, homelessness rates had almost doubled in the decade before the crisis.

Yet emergency housing policies for this most vulnerable group tended to be the least common of all pandemic measures. Where they did exist, it was often at a subnational level. Though regions and municipalities can at times target resources more appropriately, they almost always have fewer resources than national governments.

The pandemic also added to the heightened risk of people living in overcrowded dwellings, who make up 15 percent of the total EU population. Among low-income workers under 30, that share reaches 40 percent. Overcrowded dwellings have presented particular challenges during the pandemic, because of both an increased risk of infection when some household members remain employed outside the home, and a lack of workspace for household members working from home.

The pandemic has presented home-based challenges even for those who did not experience housing insecurity and were able to keep their jobs and work from home. Common gendered divisions of labor have intensified in remote work situations, as women continue to shoulder more of the childcare burden while attempting to call in to work. On the other hand, some men report contributing to childcare more than they did before the pandemic, and men who were previously employed outside of the home full time have gained a more intimate look at the daily running of a household. It remains to be seen how these experiences will play out in the paid and unpaid labor markets in the post-pandemic world, though many predictions tend to err on the side of more gender inequality, not less.

No lives have been left untouched during the pandemic. However, because income, and especially wealth, inequality had been increasing well before the pandemic, all were not affected equally. People employed in high-income and highly educated, knowledge-intensive sectors were more likely to shelter and work from home. This group has always had more disposable income to spend on goods, services, and leisure activities. Once the crisis hit, lockdowns created a forced savings mechanism; even when restaurants and other services reopened, people working from home had fewer incentives to go out.

Excess income and different space, layout, and location needs combined to help drive a housing boom during the pandemic. In the first year, housing prices increased worldwide. Germany, France, the UK, and the Netherlands all experienced at

least a 5 percent increase, as did several other European countries. Luxembourg saw an unprecedented 17 percent increase. Though the complete picture of 2021 price increases is not yet known, the data indicate a continued pandemic housing boom.

Inequality is a primary driver of such bizarre occurrences. Greater levels of inequality mean a share of households at the top of the income distribution can not only acquire housing easily, but consolidate their capital by buying larger properties or second properties, or investing in housing as a rental property. This trend extends beyond household investments, since global investors often use housing stock in big cities to park their capital. Such practices inflate the value of housing and lead to supply crunches, especially when investors, instead of renting a unit, keep it vacant while it appreciates in value. One important implication of unequal housing markets is that growing levels of wealth inequality further perpetuate housing challenges for most people, while allowing a privileged minority to further capitalize on its advantages.

PROTESTS IN THE AIR

Short- and long-term pressure points around employment, housing, and health reached a crescendo during the pandemic. Housing-related discontent can be seen everywhere in Europe. Grassroots movements in Spain and Berlin capture many facets of the conflict.

In Spain, social organizations and activists have been working in major cities like Madrid and Barcelona since at least the 2008 housing crash to prevent the forcible removal of people from their homes. The movement became visible in Madrid in 2012 with its efforts to prevent foreclosure-related evictions led by Spanish savings banks, which at the time held more than half the mortgage value in the country. The movement gained notice again in Barcelona in 2021 for its efforts to prevent rental-related evictions led by foreign investment firms. Such clashes highlight how the key actors have changed in the years between the 2008 housing crash and the COVID-19 affordable housing crisis.

In the 2008 housing crash and the resulting wave of evictions, many of the largest financial actors were Spain-based entities, though some had international ties. In the post-crisis years, Spanish savings banks were consolidated, bailed out, or nationalized by the Bank of Spain or the Fund for

Orderly Bank Restructuring, the public entity created to stabilize the banking sector. Intervening on the side of residents, the Spanish government, in agreement with the Spanish Banking Association, suspended eviction cases for two years for those households considered extremely vulnerable.

In contrast, in 2021 some of the primary financial actors were international, and focused more on rental than on homeownership markets. Foreign investment firms had capitalized on the post-crash period by purchasing large numbers of units across Spain, notably in cities like Barcelona, where the protests are particularly visible. The anti-eviction movement thus runs up against a globalized rental market and well-funded investment firms. Residents falling behind on their rent or being evicted often face a landlord outside the country. Moreover, tenants evicted for rental nonpayment during the pandemic have had a much shorter window than owners in the 2008 housing crash who held a greater claim to their homes during foreclosure proceedings. Put simply, eviction due to rental nonpayment is a quicker legal process than eviction due to mortgage nonpayment.

While the rise of international actors exacerbated housing inequality, similar dynamics within countries also contributed to the same problem. Even states with strong protections for tenants

struggled with this issue. Germany is known for its large rental sector; in Berlin more than four out of five households rent. As a large majority of the population, tenants have proved a more formidable constituency, both before and during the pandemic. Though Berlin has historically been an affordable capital city, rents and housing prices have been ticking upward for the last decade, with a housing shortage and a price boom occurring before and during the pandemic. In this context, a recent movement against investors and real estate companies gained striking momentum.

The Berlin state government has not been deaf to the concerns of tenants. In 2020, it instituted a 5-year rent freeze and a forced reduction in rents that were in excess of a standardized rate. The Federal Constitutional Court overturned the law in early 2021, ruling that Berlin did not have the jurisdiction to pass and implement a rent cap. That ruling gave landlords the right to collect back payment for units whose rent had been lowered,

deepening households' pandemic-related financial difficulties.

Enter the "Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co." movement. Named after one of the largest property companies in Germany, this movement ultimately mobilized a majority of voters in September 2021 to approve a referendum proposal to require large real estate companies (those with more than 3,000 properties) to sell all their holdings to the city at less than market value. Though the referendum was nonbinding, it points to a deep frustration: residents are willing to nationalize over 10 percent of the city's private rental units.

The referendum also hearkens back to a time before reunification, when even in West Berlin the social housing sector was larger than either the private rental or ownership sectors. (East Berlin followed a near-full social housing model.) In the decades after reunification, as the movement organizers point out, many units falling under the expropriation proposal were privatized and sold to the same large real estate companies under public scrutiny today. The protests in Spain and Berlin offer just two examples of a wave of housing-related

protests across Europe, protests that underscore the political nature of inequality.

*Concerns about housing
affordability now extend well
into the middle class.*

POWER AND HOUSING REFORM

Long-term trends and governmental decisions in prior

decades are culminating in the housing affordability crisis we see today. In previous eras, the term "affordable housing" was typically associated with antipoverty housing programs or social housing. That time is no more, since concerns about housing affordability now extend well into the middle class. The housing crisis is driven by many factors, including financialization and deregulation of housing markets, a shift in ideology toward devaluing social housing and promoting homeownership, and the added buying power of households in the two decades preceding the 2008 housing crash. But arguably, inequality and choices made by governments are at the root of all these trends.

Inequality, especially extreme wealth inequality, lures investors into global housing markets. It often leads developers to design and deliver luxury units rather than affordable housing units, since high-income earners and other investors demand such offerings. This trend affects one tail of the income and wealth distribution. The other

tail, consisting of those in more precarious housing situations, feels these effects through an inability to compete with better-resourced households.

Long-term structural changes are necessary. Such change is difficult for governments faced with competing interests, especially when those who benefit from the status quo are better organized and better funded. Underlying the protests and tenants' rights movements is a hard political truth: low-income and other vulnerable groups will always have a difficult time pursuing their collective interests, especially in times of extreme inequality. Even when they can and do mobilize, the path from mobilization to policy change is not clearly marked.

Rich households and global investors may seem like proper targets of reforms seeking solutions to unaffordable housing, a core aim of the Berlin referendum. But we should realize that it is ultimately governments that have responsibility for regulating housing markets, for ensuring that the poorest are housed, and for delivering some level

of equal housing access to all parts of the income distribution. Though housing traditionally has been studied through the lenses of economics, sociology, and housing studies, the fundamental issue of inequality is about power—the stock and trade of political science.

The path forward must include recognition of the many complexities of these power dynamics. Housing inequalities extend beyond income, with some generations experiencing enabling housing policies and others experiencing disabling ones. Even within households, men and women experience housing structures and housing markets differently. The world did not need COVID-19 to uncover such dynamics. They have been laid bare since at least the 2008 financial crisis. The pandemic does, however, provide another opportunity for governments to recalibrate their approaches. To do so, they will need to completely rethink how housing markets should be conceived, structured, and regulated. ■

“Inequalities between people with and without disabilities persist despite the fact that European civil society and public authorities have been relatively active over the past 70 years in trying to integrate people with disabilities into society.”

Disability Rights and Cross-National Disparities in Europe

AUDE LEJEUNE

Out of a European population of 448 million, some 80 million people have a disability. People with disabilities are thus the largest minority group in the region, according to the European Parliamentary Research Service. Compared with the nondisabled, they also still face persistent exclusion and unequal opportunities in all areas of their lives.

**Disability
and Equality**

Seventh in a series

People with disabilities often leave school early. According to data from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, 60 percent of Romanians who are 18 to 24 years old and have at least one “long-standing limitation in performing usual activities,” such as walking, seeing, or concentrating and remembering, have not completed their schooling, whereas just 17 percent of young people with no such difficulties have left school. Even in Sweden, where the rate of leaving school early is the lowest in Europe, 10 percent of young people with disabilities have not finished school, compared with 4 percent of their nondisabled peers.

The employment rate for people with disabilities is also much lower than that of the general population. In EU member states, only 47 percent of those who report at least one difficulty in an activity of daily living are employed, compared with 67 percent of those having no such difficulty. In some countries, such as Hungary and the Netherlands, this employment rate gap is even wider, reaching almost 40 percentage points (24 versus 61 percent in Hungary; 42 versus 80 percent in the Netherlands). Even though work is not the only

source of income available to people with disabilities, its absence exposes them to a higher risk of poverty and precarity.

People with disabilities who enter the labor market also experience different employment conditions than people without disabilities. They are more likely to be employed in menial jobs, and to find it more difficult to climb the hierarchical ladder and reach managerial positions. In addition to these inequalities in status, there are also inequalities in remuneration: the EU average for income of people with a recognized disability is lower than that of nondisabled people. Though these inequalities in employment and remuneration can be explained in part by lower levels of training and qualification, they are also the product of a whole series of social mechanisms—from lack of accessible public transport to assumptions about limited capabilities—that contribute to excluding people with disabilities from the labor market.

Education and employment are not the only areas where such inequalities are found. They are also apparent in access to goods and services, housing, and political participation. Inequalities between people with and without disabilities persist despite the fact that European civil society and public authorities have been relatively active over the past 70 years in trying to integrate people with disabilities into society, at both the European level and the national level.

This article aims to explore both the European model of disability rights, and disparities between countries’ policy approaches and outcomes. It will show how these disparities can be explained by distinct national histories of social mobilizations and the differing ways in which public authorities have addressed disability in each country. But what makes Europe unique in disability policy is

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the role of the European Union. The existence of a supranational level of government in Europe—the EU—has made it possible to define a variety of policies aimed at establishing shared goals and perspectives across all EU member states.

A EUROPEAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

In the field of disability policy, proactive European programs have been in place since the 1970s. At first, these policies aimed to promote the integration of people with disabilities into the labor market, which was seen as the most appropriate mechanism to facilitate their participation in social life. The policies also encouraged member states to provide social protections, such as unemployment benefits, for people who were not able to work.

In the 1990s, disability activists and scholars from the emerging academic field of disability studies played a crucial role in lobbying for policy changes at the European level. In many countries in the region, new civil society groups were created, run by people who themselves had disabilities. In contrast with the preexisting, long-established organizations, which were mostly run by families of people with disabilities and aimed to assist and protect them, these new groups made different demands: they wished to speak in their own name, and lobbied for rights and social inclusion.

These groups were directly inspired by the political mobilization of grassroots groups in the United States that had lobbied to change the understanding of disability and to frame it as a civil rights issue. Their efforts led to the 1990 enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the first comprehensive law in any country prohibiting discrimination on the ground of disability and guaranteeing the rights of people with disabilities to participate fully in society. European organizations also demanded passage of a binding legal text at the EU level to ensure equal opportunities for people with and without disabilities.

Whereas previous policies had focused on providing social allowances and creating socially separated institutions (such as sheltered workshops), rehabilitation programs, and employment quotas, activists asserted that people with disabilities should have the right to equal opportunities and inclusion within the wider society. Such demands were encapsulated by the leading slogan of

the disability movement, “Nothing about us without us.”

This social mobilization led to a new legal and policy approach to disability. In 2000, 10 years after the ADA was enacted, an EU directive prohibiting discrimination in employment based on sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability—the Employment Equality Directive—was adopted by the European Council.

This regulation provides people with disabilities with stronger protection against discrimination by imposing on employers a specific duty to make reasonable accommodations. That means taking appropriate measures to enable people with disabilities to obtain job training and employment, and to advance in the workplace, unless doing so would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. (In practice, this has not led to many new duties for employers.)

This right to reasonable accommodation has become emblematic of a new approach based on inclusion, self-determination, and equal treatment. In each EU member state, national legislation was passed to prohibit discrimination based on disability, among other grounds, following the principles of the Employment Equality Directive.

*A legalistic, rights-based approach
has taken hold in Europe.*

TAKING ON SOCIAL BARRIERS

The Employment Equality Directive was not the only instrument that contributed to the diffusion of an antidiscrimination approach to disability in Europe. In 2007, all EU member states but one ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), with Latvia following a year later. The CRPD states that disability must be understood as a social construct rather than a medical phenomenon. It seeks to guarantee the rights of people who have “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

As a result of these changes in laws, European policymakers have started to shift their focus from social protection toward equal rights and antidiscrimination. The remit of disability policies has also been extended into new areas. Instead of focusing only on employment, or on alternative sources of income in case of

unemployment, the antidiscrimination approach aims to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities in all areas of social life, from the cultural, family, and sexual spheres to politics and activism.

As in other parts of the world, such as East Asia, as described by Celeste Arrington in *Current History's* September 2021 issue (in the first installment of this series), a legalistic, rights-based approach has taken hold in Europe. Victims of discrimination are encouraged to turn to the judicial system to assert their rights as citizens who are entitled to fight for inclusion within society. The enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation is guaranteed by courts and tribunals, which can hold to account any business or other entity that fails to comply with the law and fulfill its obligations to make reasonable accommodations for the disability of an employee, such as by modifying working hours. In April 2013, a landmark decision of the European Court of Justice in a Danish case gave a definition of reasonable accommodations, including changes in workplaces, work schedules, and so forth.

In order to facilitate access to justice for victims of discrimination, each EU member state was obliged by the EU directive to set up an independent public agency charged with fighting discrimination and providing legal assistance to plaintiffs. Thus, France has its *Défenseur des Droits*, Sweden its *Diskriminerings Ombudsman*, Germany its *Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*, and Romania its *Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminării*. New policies have also granted nongovernmental organizations greater access to the legal system. As a result, this new legal framework opened up opportunities for disability activist groups to use litigation as a mechanism for enforcing the law and pursuing rights for people with disabilities.

In 2019, the EU went a step further in its efforts to integrate people with disabilities into society. Directive 2019/882, known as the Accessibility Act, was passed with the aim of guaranteeing all Europeans easier access to goods and services in various domains, such as banking and public services websites. The Accessibility Act explicitly took into account the obligations deriving from the CRPD. It does not include any duty related to housing or public transportation, however. Each member state is responsible for defining, in its own national laws, whether and to what extent accessibility must be ensured in these domains.

This is not to say that the conditions of existence for people with disabilities are the same in all European member states. There are major disparities between countries in terms of income and integration into ordinary life for people with disabilities.

In the 1970s, when the European Union's predecessor, the European Economic Community, launched its first disability policies, member states had already been making policy in this area on the national level for more than sixty years, as the political scientist Daniel Kelemen has noted. In most European countries, disability became an issue of public concern after World War I, when many wounded veterans returned from combat. Each country dealt with the issue in a different way, however. The resulting national traditions created distinct path dependencies (a long-term series of policy choices and consequences determined by those traditions) that are still visible today. Disparities between European countries are apparent not only in public policies at the national level and in social mobilizations, but also in basic living conditions for people with disabilities.

A comparison of the situations for disability rights in Sweden and France is instructive. These two EU member states represent two different models of advocacy and state intervention. A look at the differences in their social mobilizations and public policies aimed at integrating people with disabilities into the labor market reveals not only distinct national approaches to disability, but also deep inequalities.

IN FRANCE, COUNTING TO INTEGRATE

Under the French model, the approach of public authorities to disability can be summarized by two words: counting and integration. Disability policies have primarily focused on integrating people with disabilities into the labor market. This goal has mostly been pursued through an employment quota system, an approach also taken in other EU member states, such as Germany, Italy, and Poland.

In the aftermath of World War I, a French law required private companies and public administrations to recruit at least 10 percent of employees from among those who had become disabled as a result of war injuries or an industrial accident. In the same period, a system of organizations was established for the employment of people with disabilities who were not able to work in regular jobs. This system was, and remains, separate from the

ordinary labor market. In these sheltered workshops—called *établissements et services d'aide par le travail* (establishments and services for assistance through work)—people with disabilities are recruited with the status of “users” rather than employees. They do not receive the same protections from labor laws as those working under employment contracts.

In 1957, alongside the system of sheltered workshops, a new quota system was established to grant people with disabilities a certain priority for employment in the ordinary labor market. This was conditional on a person obtaining the status of “disabled worker,” an administrative determination by an interdisciplinary commission comprising physicians, social workers, and civil society leaders, among others. Over the years, the quota requirement has oscillated within the range of 3–10 percent. In 1987, the quota was set at 6 percent; a financial contribution to an assistance fund became compulsory for companies that did not comply.

A law on “equal opportunity, participation, and citizenship for people with disabilities” that took effect in 2005 reinforced the quota-based system. It also introduced the antidiscrimination approach to disability into French law for the first time, however. In contrast with the quota system, this approach guarantees inclusion and equality of access to the labor market for everyone, not only for those who have previously been officially recognized as disabled.

From this perspective, disability is seen as being socially constructed, and resulting from the interaction between people with disabilities and their physical, social, and institutional environments, which have not been sufficiently adapted to their needs. According to this logic, all aspects of work environments—including workplaces, schedules, and buildings—must be made accessible to people with all types of disability.

In France, the introduction of the antidiscrimination framework in relation to disability, including the right to reasonable accommodation, did not result from mobilization on the ground by local movements. Instead, it was driven by the EU’s adoption of the Employment Equality Directive. The legal recognition of a right not to be discriminated against on the ground of disability was also connected to French authorities’ concern about

the distribution of social security benefits, in a context of drastic cuts in public funding for welfare provision.

Indeed, the antidiscrimination approach has had concrete effects on the distribution of social allowances since the 2005 passage of the French law on disability, as shown by researchers Seak-Hy Lo and Isabelle Ville. The disabled adult allowance used to be given to individuals depending on their degree of “incapacity,” conceived as a deficit in relation to a nondisabled worker, as established by a physician. The allowance is now tied to the regular evaluation of disabled people’s “employability,” with the aim of encouraging participation in the labor market by everyone who is able to work.

In France, the antidiscrimination approach has not entirely replaced the older system. The integration of people with disabilities in employment now relies on two concurrent logics: first, their official recognition as workers with disabilities, different from others who have no disability; and second, the adaptation of work

environments to their needs, on the principle that everyone should be treated equally. In this context, ambiguities persist.

For instance, if a worker lodges a complaint of discrimination based on disability with the *Défenseur des Droits*, it is advantageous for that person to have first obtained the status of disabled worker. Legal investigators working for the *Défenseur des Droits* consider this official recognition to be the first step in the pursuit of workers’ rights. But it is based on a medical and individual assessment of the person’s disability, which runs counter to the broader social conception of disability that prevails in the antidiscrimination approach.

Thus, French disability policies aimed at promoting equal treatment and opportunities for all human beings, in particular by fighting against all forms of discrimination on the basis of disability, have not erased the previous logic of counting people with disabilities and regulating the status of “disabled worker.” Although France has ratified the CRPD, which defines disability as the product of the interaction between people with disabilities and their environment, its policies are still strongly influenced by a categorical and individual approach to disability.

The new approach is based on inclusion, self-determination, and equal treatment.

TOWARD INCLUSION IN SWEDEN

Sweden's model of disability policy combines social protection with inclusion. As in other Scandinavian countries, Swedish disability policies have been built on a particular set of pillars: universalist income-maintenance provisions for any person who cannot work because of an "impairment" (defined as any loss in relation to "normal" physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory capabilities), major efforts to promote the inclusion of everyone in paid work, support services aimed at promoting autonomy, and an emphasis on the accessibility of public places.

Public spending on "incapacity" benefits, for those who are deemed unable to work owing to sickness, disability, or occupational injury, has long been much higher in Sweden, Finland, and Denmark than in other European countries. In 2019, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, such spending represented 4.9 percent of gross domestic product in Denmark, compared with only 1.5 percent in Hungary.

Sweden is often cited as having a successful inclusion model, with policies that are relatively congruent with the accessibility objectives defined by the CRPD. As early as the 1950s, as noted by sociologist Jan Tøssebro, disability policies in Sweden encouraged the inclusion of people with disabilities in society through a process of normalization, designed to offer them living conditions similar to those of nondisabled people. Sweden also experienced the trend of deinstitutionalization earlier than other European countries.

In the 1990s, in a context of financing deficits in social security funds and narrowing eligibility, disability activists lobbied for change. They argued that Sweden had succeeded in providing social protection for people with disabilities, as well as sheltered workshops separate from the ordinary labor market, but had failed in guaranteeing them access to the paid labor market. By demanding such access, they played an important role in promoting an antidiscrimination approach to disability, influencing the decisions and actions of policymakers, employers, and civil society groups.

In 1999, as a result of their mobilization, the Swedish parliament passed a law prohibiting employment discrimination based on disability. Under this law, every person applying for a job is guaranteed the right to be judged on the basis of their employment capacity, rather than on the

basis of their disability. Employers also have a duty to make reasonable accommodations to the needs of their employees with disabilities by modifying the work environment. On this matter, Sweden's 1999 law preceded by one year the EU Employment Equality Directive. In contrast with what happened in France, where the national law was inspired by the European directive of 2000, the Swedish government was directly influenced by the ADA, which had been passed nine years earlier in the United States.

Throughout the early 2000s, Swedish laws prohibiting discrimination were extended from the field of employment to other areas, such as education, public transport, and the built environment. This trend culminated in the 2009 adoption of the Antidiscrimination Act, which addresses all kinds of discrimination, including disability. In compliance with the law, public services called Supported Employment Programs have been put in place to assist people with disabilities in finding a job and to provide wage subsidies to employers recruiting employees with disabilities. Additionally, the act obliges employers to make reasonable accommodations in workplaces to fit the needs of workers with disabilities.

The comparison of France and Sweden shows how older disability policies now coexist with antidiscrimination measures aimed at promoting full participation in society for everyone. Both protection and inclusion measures are implemented in different ways in each country, however, depending on distinct national histories of disability policies. To include people with disabilities in the labor market, France chose a system based on quotas to ensure that employers fulfill their duty to recruit employees with disabilities, whereas Sweden encouraged inclusion through job-coaching programs.

DISCRIMINATION AND DISPARITIES

Over the past twenty years, the European Union and the CRPD have played important roles in shaping disability policies in all EU member states. Some countries, such as Sweden, had already taken measures to guarantee inclusion and prevent discrimination against people with disabilities in employment before the adoption of the EU directive of 2000. But this was not the case for all member states. For some, like France, antidiscrimination rhetoric arose later. Meanwhile, the living conditions of people with disabilities still vary substantially. European statistics show that access to

education, health services, employment, and public transportation for people with disabilities differs widely from Northern to Southern Europe, and from Western to Eastern Europe.

Beyond these cross-national disparities, the introduction of an antidiscrimination approach has influenced the ways in which people with disabilities understand their own experiences and pursue their rights in the majority of member states. Health and disability have recently become the grounds of discrimination that are most frequently reported to equality agencies and to the civil justice systems in many EU countries, ahead of complaints relating to ethnicity and sex.

In France, for example, 33 percent of complaints received by the Equality Agency in 2018 concerned discrimination on the grounds of disability or health, whereas only 25 percent related

to ethnic origin, skin color, and/or nationality, and 8.5 percent to sex and/or pregnancy. The same trend can be observed in Romania, where in 2019, 30 percent of complaints concerned disability or health, 17 percent ethnicity, and 8 percent sex.

As these figures show, people with disabilities in Europe can still face challenges when they try to assert their rights. They may now file complaints with public agencies devoted to ensuring compliance with nondiscrimination laws. Such cases, often brought by associations and activist groups, can lead to an investigation by these agencies, or to lawsuits brought before civil, criminal, or administrative courts. These actions, as well as the media coverage of such cases, have concrete, though still extremely limited, effects on the inclusion of people with disabilities in European society. ■

“[T]he Swiss form of assisted suicide reflects a political culture and a medical ethic that are reluctant to institutionalize this practice.”

The Ambiguities of Assisted Suicide in Switzerland

ALEXANDRE PILLONEL

The 1960s represented an extraordinary advance in intensive-care techniques in the medical field, such as artificial ventilation, cardiopulmonary reanimation, and other lifesaving innovations. Yet the decade also produced new approaches to death. With the development of critical care medicine and the proliferation of intensive care units, dying, once understood as an event, became processual.

Abstract conceptions of death, by definition, leave space for the concreteness of dying. Thanks to growing technical prowess, most people now tend to die later in life, and to die more slowly. Since the 1980s, the great majority of people in advanced industrial countries have died in institutions, whether hospitals or hospices. This social, political, and technical configuration led to the emergence of a set of critiques concerning the excesses of therapeutic obstinacy (attempting through medical actions to prolong the life of a patient facing an irreversible diagnosis) and patients' loss of autonomy when faced with their finitude.

Over the first two decades of the twenty-first century, diverse contemporary models of end-of-life accompaniment were consolidated. Between the depenalization of euthanasia practices and the development of palliative care, assisted suicide has emerged as a third alternative. It is practiced in a variety of national contexts today, but the Swiss model is a unique application of this right to die. Unlike other countries that practice medicalized forms of assisted suicide, in Switzerland assisted suicide is mainly carried out by citizens' associations—which is to say, outside of specifically medical institutions.

To a certain extent, the Swiss form of assisted suicide reflects a political culture and a medical ethic that are reluctant to institutionalize this practice. The gap left by this social, political, and medical reluctance has been filled by a citizens' movement claiming a right to self-determination at the end of life. To grasp the nature of this Swiss particularity, it is necessary to understand the history of these associations. The 40-year history of EXIT ADMD Suisse romande (Association pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité), an association that has been providing assisted suicide services in the French-speaking part of Switzerland for over 20 years, provides an instructive case study of the Swiss approach to the practice.

IMAGINING AN ALTERNATIVE

In 1982, a group of eight individuals, mainly women doctors, gathered around a table in a café in the city of Geneva. Inspired by the EXIT movement born in England in 1935, they decided to create an association with the objective of alleviating suffering at the end of life, as well as giving the patient autonomy in this domain.

Adopting as a model the “living wills” that were being developed in several American states, the association campaigned first and foremost to make these documents of patients' wishes for end-of-life care (which would be called, a few years later in the Swiss context, “advance directives”) binding on medical authorities. Originally, these directives were thought of as an instrument to fight against a form of medical power considered paternalistic. They could serve as a means of forcing doctors to conform to the presumed will of the patient.

Ethical standards concerning end-of-life options at that time arrogated to medical practice a moral prerogative. In the 1980s, this approach led to the introduction of palliative care units. This

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deference to medical authority was challenged by the initiative of the Geneva association, which was regarded as a form of interference in a field that medical institutions considered to be their own. The ensuing confrontation between these official institutions and civil society was as inevitable as it was unequal. Buoyed by public opinion favorable to the recognition of this right to self-determination at the end of life, the association took its claims into the political arena around 1993.

After intense political lobbying by this association, the canton of Geneva recognized the validity of advance directives in 1996. Seventeen years later, the Swiss Confederation recognized under cantonal law the binding force of these directives, while limiting their scope to provisions that do not violate any law. This national-level policy also recognized the authority of a therapeutic representative—someone empowered in advance to make decisions about therapy on behalf of a patient if their decision-making ability (also known as the capacity of discernment) is lost.

The policy excluded any possibility of specifying in these directives wishes by individuals to be helped to end their lives, mostly because direct active euthanasia remained illegal in Switzerland, and assisted suicide was not recognized as a medical procedure when the federal law was drafted. Nonetheless, advance directives came to be uniformly governed by federal law as of January 1, 2013.

From its inception, EXIT ADM D Suisse romande, in an extension of its initial line of advocacy concerning advance directives, also campaigned for the depenalization of euthanasia practices carried out by doctors. Passive euthanasia (also known as therapeutic withdrawal) and indirect active euthanasia, which is inspired by the medieval moral doctrine of double effect (in this case, hastening death through the desire to relieve suffering), were and still are tolerated and left to the discretion of medical judgment. But direct, active euthanasia, regarded as “murder at the request of the victim,” according to Article 114 of the Swiss penal code, is still punishable by a custodial sentence of three years or a pecuniary penalty.

Between 1997 and 1999, a commission of experts composed of jurists, ethicists, and doctors was set up to deliberate on these questions. In

2001, based on one of the proposals made by the majority of this commission, a parliamentary initiative was brought before the Swiss government with the aim of depenalizing “exceptional euthanasia.” The initiative was inspired by the passage of similar legislation in the Netherlands in 2001. But the Swiss proposal was promptly rejected by the Federal Council (the executive branch of the government), thus reconfirming the illicit status of direct, active euthanasia.

The inertia resulting from these debates, which dragged on for several decades, led EXIT ADM D Suisse romande to imagine an alternative for the growing number of its members who wanted to end their lives. By 1983, it developed a “self-deliverance” guide, specifying different procedures for committing suicide with reliable methods. Most of these methods involved the use of therapeutics that could be accessed only by doctors, though without much difficulty.

This initiative, in a roundabout way, encouraged doctors to carry out direct, active euthanasia according to their patient’s wishes, by sending a lethal solution to certain members of the association so that they could dispose of their lives as they wished. The initiative drew immediate criticism from the medical profession, and more widely from the Swiss public.

Nevertheless, until the beginning of 2000, help with suicide was practiced in the French-speaking part of Switzerland—though in a clandestine manner and without any form of in-person assistance.

In short, from 1982 to 2000, assisted suicide as it is framed today in Switzerland, with accompaniment by a volunteer from an association, was completely absent from the agenda of EXIT ADM D Suisse romande. The group’s German-speaking Swiss sister association, EXIT Deutsche Schweiz, has been providing assistance with suicide since the late 1980s (without making any claims in the public arena). But it was not until 1998 that a doctor (a member of the French EXIT association) privately carried out an assisted suicide in French-speaking Switzerland.

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED LEGITIMACY

Since 1942, according to Article 115 of the Swiss penal code, assistance with suicide has been considered legal as long as it is not conducted with

Doctors and associations for the right to die with dignity are now talking to each other.

a self-interested motive. When the code was written in the early 1940s, jurists felt it was unfair to punish assistance in suicides motivated by affairs of honor or romance—as in a case of a comrade in arms who lent his service weapon to a friend who felt obliged to cleanse his honor in blood, for example. But they did not consider the possibility of assisted suicide for medical reasons.

The doctor who carried out the 1998 assisted suicide was a member of the expert commission deliberating on the modality of assisted death. He provided assistance for one of his patients who was suffering from terminal cancer. The assistance was provided in a transparent manner; the legal authorities and the media were informed immediately after the assisted suicide was carried out. The judicial investigation resulted in a closure order with no charges filed, and henceforth the issue of assisted suicide became a subject of debate in the public domain.

The visibility that this doctor acquired propelled him a few years later to the presidency of EXIT ADMD Suisse romande. As president, he implemented a mode and model of assisted suicide in which a person capable of discernment who decides to end his or her life is accompanied by a volunteer member of the association, with the participation of a physician who attests to the medical reasons justifying a prescription for the lethal solution of barbiturates.

A parliamentary initiative in 2001 sought to prohibit assisted suicide, just as it was beginning to be practiced by EXIT ADMD Suisse romande and by other associations, such as EXIT Deutsche Schweiz. The initiative was rejected by the highest government authorities. The legal recognition of assisted suicide for medical reasons was thus established.

The indeterminate nature of Article 115, which does not define any positive criteria for access to assisted suicide, nonetheless remained a source of concern for doctors, ethicists, and politicians. In response, a framework for the practice was developed by EXIT ADMD Suisse romande over time. From the outset of the effort to formalize the norms of the practice, it was envisioned that a patient must be an adult, suffering from an incurable disease with a fatal prognosis in the short term, retaining the capacity of discernment at the time of the suicide, and the ability to carry out the terminal act on their own.

Assisted suicide, considered as a particular modality of suicide, is still treated under Swiss law as a violent death, which automatically triggers a judicial investigation. But in the course of that inquest, police officers, medical examiners, and prosecutors can ensure that the established framework for assisted suicide is respected.

Various medical-ethical, professional, and institutional bodies came to take a position on this practice and drew up their own recommendations. These directives, which are not directly governed by law, nevertheless allow associations like EXIT ADMD Suisse romande a certain amount of leeway to change, over time, the criteria for access and the places in which assisted suicide can be carried out.

Two strategies were favored. The first, following the precedent established by EXIT ADMD Suisse romande in its campaign for the recognition of advance directives, made good use of the Swiss political system of direct democracy to spur debate on these issues in the public sphere. Between 2012 and 2014, referendums in some Swiss cantons

forced health care institutions to authorize assisted suicide within their walls.

The second strategy consisted of the association implementing by itself, without any input from expert advisory panels, an extension of

the criteria for access to assisted suicide. The most striking example concerned the expansion of criteria to cover cases of disabling, age-related poly-pathologies, added to the association's statutes in 2014. This clarified a change that had occurred roughly since 2007, whereby illnesses other than those that are incurable and fatal in the short term could count as reasons to request assistance with suicide.

EXIT ADMD Suisse romande is not the only association in Switzerland carrying out assisted suicides. EXIT Deutsche Schweiz, Dignitas, Lifecircle, and EX international also have histories full of controversy and struggle that have contributed to the Swiss public and political debates on the issue. The latter three associations, unlike EXIT ADMD Suisse romande and EXIT Deutsche Schweiz, practice assisted suicide for foreigners who travel to Switzerland to end their lives. This particularity of assisted suicide in Switzerland, commonly called "death tourism," has preoccupied many Swiss politicians.

*Social recognition of assisted
suicide in Switzerland
remains fragile.*

Between 2000 and 2019, a variety of other parliamentary initiatives came up for deliberation. Some sought to prohibit the participation of doctors and associations, tolerating only assisted suicide performed by relatives. Others proposed putting the practices of the associations under state regulation, through the application of rigorous due diligence criteria.

None of these parliamentary initiatives have been accepted by the federal government. Since 2001, the government has maintained the status quo, declining to consider legislation or state regulation of EXIT ADMD Suisse romande and the other associations, on the grounds that doing so would risk institutionalizing their practices. The refusal of the Swiss federal state to legislate on this matter has effectively delegated its regulatory responsibility to other actors in Swiss society. In fact, the assisted suicide associations are often left to regulate themselves. This element explains, to some extent, the particular form that assisted suicide takes in Switzerland. But it is not the only one.

RELUCTANT DOCTORS

In contrast to the situation in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg in Europe, as well as in Canada and some US states, the absence of medical involvement in the development of new contemporary forms of dying in Switzerland is also crucial to understanding the Swiss particularity of assisted suicide. The Swiss medical system has always refused to become involved in actions intended to hasten death. Instead, it has favored the development of palliative care, while tolerating practices of therapeutic withdrawal as well as the doctrine of double effect.

If EXIT ADMD Suisse romande and the other associations recognize the validity of this position, they nevertheless highlight its incompleteness. They therefore continue to develop an alternative for people suffering from an incurable disease with a fatal prognosis who wish to avoid being subjected to medical prerogatives concerning their end-of-life experience. These medical reasons, as well as the requirement that the patient have a capacity for discernment, constitute minimal criteria for access to assisted suicide. A medical assessment as well as an attestation of capacity is necessary.

When the first assisted suicides occurred in Switzerland—using barbiturates, to which only doctors had access, to assist people in achieving their wish to die voluntarily—the medical ethics

commissions were obliged to take a position on this emerging practice. In the name of curative ethics, they initially sought to prohibit the participation of physicians in assisted suicides. This attempt to set a professional ethical standard did not have the desired effect, since the commissions had no authority to enforce such a prohibition.

In 2003, faced with the legal recognition of assisted suicide, the medical ethics commissions softened their position and established a series of recommendations acknowledging that a physician, for personal reasons, could choose to participate in such a process. Yet it was not until 2018 that one of these commissions recognized that assisted suicide, under certain conditions, can be considered a tolerable medical act, if not without controversy.

The ambiguity of the reluctant but necessary involvement of medicine in the formalization of assisted suicide thus provides a second element for understanding the particularity of the Swiss approach. This is why assisted suicide in Switzerland, unlike all other forms of medicalized aid in dying in the world, is categorized by state authorities as a violent death. It also explains how the accompaniment carried out by associations has come under legal supervision through the systematic opening of postmortem judicial investigations.

The softening of the positions of various medical institutions on this issue has occurred in tandem with a diminishment in the intensity of conflict, over time, between the associations and the medical world. Until recently, the associations considered the legality of assisted suicide to be a sufficient justification to impose on health care personnel a practice that for many disrupted their professional culture. Defending the principle of self-determination concerning the end of life as an inalienable right, the volunteers from EXIT ADMD Suisse romande neglected the importance of establishing spaces for negotiation, exchange, and communication with the diverse actors involved in bringing about an assisted suicide. In the name of this principle, some professionals in institutions, as well as certain family members (mainly spouses and children) of a loved one wishing to end his or her life, were simply not informed of the plans for assisted suicide.

This adversarial culture within EXIT ADMD Suisse romande ended in 2018, when a new co-president was elected. The association by this point had substantial achievements to its name, having contributed to the progressive widening of the criteria for

access to assisted suicide and the kinds of sites in which it could be performed. Now the association eyed a new objective: standardizing and professionalizing the practice to ensure that its limits remained sufficiently flexible, but were stable enough to avert new conflicts that could damage its hard-earned legitimacy.

The norm of transparency that contributed to the legal recognition of assisted suicide at the beginning of the twenty-first century became an operating principle necessary for the implementation of the practice. At present, clinicians and other medical professionals are aware of this normative orientation toward openness. When faced with situations of discord and conflict within families regarding loved ones' decisions to end their lives, those working in the name of the association strongly emphasize the importance of seeking reconciliation.

The consequences of this new mode of governance were almost immediate. The conflict between the institutional world of medicine and the associative world of a civil movement faded away. Spaces for conciliation opened up, and communication became possible. Although we cannot really speak of Swiss collaboration between providers of palliative care and associations for the right to die with dignity—as is the case in Belgium, for example—these two worlds, which were in conflict in the 1990s, are now talking to each other. The values of both sides can find common ground through the pursuit of compromise.

THE INERTIA OF RECOGNITION

The unique Swiss approach to assisted suicide stems from three factors: the weight of popular will, crystallized in the membership of the associations for the right to die with dignity, which had 170,000 members in 2021; the refusal of the state to legislate any further than the existing legal framework; and the resistance of the medical world to institutionalizing assisted dying in routine medical practice.

What makes this history of assisted suicide in Switzerland particularly intriguing is the question: What explains the long time lag between the legalization of such an act, established in the penal code in 1942, and the recognition of the social legitimacy of a practice some 60 years later?

The most obvious answer points to context. The legality of assisted suicide was elaborated in a context in which carrying out the practice for medical reasons relating to the end of life was

unimaginable; instead, questions of honor were elevated, as with a deceived husband or a bankruptcy. This contextual reason seems insufficient, however, and requires a complementary explanation.

German philosopher Axel Honneth's influential concept of "social recognition" indicates how late modernity witnessed the advent of a new paradigmatic form of political conflict—that of the struggle for "social recognition" of culturally disdained identities. When a person affirms his wish to be assisted in his project to end his life for a set of medical reasons, his refusal of any form of therapeutic obstinacy and medicalization of this last stage of his life trajectory amounts to a claim of a right to anticipate a condition that he judges to be unworthy. We find here the expression of the principle that guided the first decades of EXIT ADMD Suisse romande.

This recognition, demanded on behalf of a deplored identity—that of patients at the end of life who wish to end their lives—is far from assured, as the past and recent tribulations of this association demonstrate. The movement faces the curative norm of medicine, medical progress in the field of intensive care and artificial life support, the development of a medicalized alternative to the management of agonizing processes through palliative care, as well as the political norm of a "right to life" enshrined in the Swiss constitution. All these trends seem to form cultural normative orientations that any claim to recognition for a life considered not worth living will have difficulty overcoming.

The fierce resistance to the institutionalization of assisted suicide is not, however, strictly related to the recognition of a right to self-determination in terms of this will to die. Suicide, though still socially prohibited today, has been decriminalized for many centuries in Europe. What is problematic is the determination of a framework within which it is acceptable to assist someone in this project. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the legal recognition of a right to self-determination at the end of life, which is a question of justice, and a social recognition by which the realization of this right with the assistance of others becomes morally and socially legitimate.

Despite the existence of an article of law, the carrying out of an assisted suicide in Switzerland is indexed to a series of norms, of criteria for judgments, each defining in its own way a level of tolerance by which an action is judged

appropriate. It is the question of assistance that is troubling in relation to the expression of a will to die. Such an intention, involving the participation of a third party, transforms this practice into a social issue that engages the judgment of others.

This explains why assisted suicide in Switzerland is a question not only of justice, but also of a process of social recognition by the community. The elements that seem best able to explain this slow process of social construction of the legitimacy of assisted suicide stem from the fact that this process depends above all on an activity of mutual understanding produced in real situations, among diverse actors embodying heterogeneous roles and upholding various professional cultures within a complex network of interrelations.

The process of social recognition of assisted suicide in Switzerland is far from complete and remains fragile. There is no way of telling whether future generations will have access to this way of dying. The cultural transformation regarding the

limits at which it is socially acceptable to be assisted in one's plan to end one's life remains subject to a degree of inertia.

In 2019, a physician-accompanier from EXIT ADMD Suisse romande was found guilty of breaking the law on therapeutic substances in carrying out an assisted suicide for a person who was neither ill, nor suffering, nor at the end of her life—an 86-year-old woman who wished to die with her ill husband. The doctor, who admitted that he had gone beyond EXIT's criteria in this instance, appealed the ruling to the highest legal authorities in Switzerland. On December 9, 2021, the Federal Court in Lausanne overturned the verdict, sending the case back to a Geneva cantonal court to be considered under a different narcotics law. The ultimate outcome of the case could well relaunch the controversy over the legitimacy of a practice that still leaves no one indifferent, pointing out the ambiguities that continue to define the unique Swiss model of assisted suicide. ■

“Perpetrators no longer seemed to have a coherent motivation based on only one ideology (or any external direction), but often created highly idiosyncratic ideologies that pulled in ideas from a wide range of sources.”

The Evolving Terrorism Threat in Europe

RAFFAELLO PANTUCCI

Two decades on from September 11, 2001, the terrorist threat in Europe has been almost entirely transformed. Far from mass casualty spectacles like the public transportation attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, the greater danger now is isolated individuals murdering politicians or stabbing random people in public places. Yet the dwindling scale of terrorism has only made plots harder to detect.

This was pointed out in the latest annual threat assessment by Europol (the European police coordinating agency), which noted that “more jihadist terrorist attacks were completed than thwarted” during 2020, the last year of reporting. Though less directly lethal, these low-scale attacks pick at social divisions in a way that can be even more dangerous than the large-scale, spectacular attacks directed by al-Qaeda or Islamic State (ISIS).

Europe has always seemed to be a secondary battlefield in the war on terrorism. But whereas the United States appears to have insulated itself from the threat at this point, Europe continues to confront a scenario that is noticeably more complicated and chronic. Terrorism’s evolving presence still poses a deep threat to European society.

POST-9/11 SPECTERS

In the immediate aftermath of the 2001 attacks on America, Europe became a key battlefield in the “Global War on Terrorism.” Revelations that a substantial part of the logistics, planning, and even recruitment for the al-Qaeda attacks had happened in Europe awakened the continent to a threat that it had inadvertently hosted. But only a few months later, Paris became a springboard for a follow-up attack on the United States. On December 22, as the

world was just starting to return to normal, a radicalized young Briton, Richard Reid, unsuccessfully tried to bring down a transatlantic flight to Miami with a bomb concealed in the heel of his shoe. Reid was part of a two-man team of Britons who had been sent by the al-Qaeda leader responsible for 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. His co-conspirator, Saajid Badat, had backed out at the last minute.

From a European perspective, these two failed attackers were in many ways even more terrifying than the 9/11 group, for which the blame could be laid on foreign shores. The notorious Hamburg cell that produced key 9/11 hijackers Mohammed Atta and Ziad Jarrah was, for the most part, made up of foreigners like them who were in Europe studying or seeking employment. Similarly, Europe was simply a backdrop for the planning meetings that took place in Spain, or the network in the United Kingdom that facilitated the dispatch of a pair of suicide bombers to Afghanistan to carry out the assassination of leading Taliban adversary Ahmed Shah Masood. In all these elements of the attack plan, Europe served as a convenient staging point for the conspirators, who drew on the continent’s Middle Eastern population.

These communities were the product of trends that had been playing out for some time. As authoritarian Arab countries cracked down on dissidents, many fled to Europe’s more liberal and protective environment, from where they could agitate for change back home. This diaspora was a constant source of tension between Arab and European governments. Arab authorities lobbied their European counterparts to crack down; Europeans pushed back, claiming that these dissidents were simply calling for legitimate political rights, in ways that were legally protected in Europe. The dissidents were often harbored in the former colonial powers that had once ruled their home countries, giving a historical resonance to the clash.

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For the most part, these dissident communities were pacific. But among them were a number of individuals willing to use violence. For them, Europe was an ideal staging ground: local political attitudes and legal systems shielded them from repatriation, while local security forces often had a relatively limited grasp of their activities or the danger they might pose. Though the specter of Muslim fundamentalism was perceived as a growing menace, it was not well understood. Often it was assumed to be a threat only to the exiles' countries of origin. France had faced a number of such threats and attacks already, but given that the network behind them had links to Algeria, in many ways this was seen as simply an extension of colonial legacies.

The jihadists themselves openly talked about Europe as an excellent base. Abu Musab al Suri, an important Syrian ideologue who first advanced the strategy of lone-actor terrorist attacks, divided his time between Spain and the UK and married a Spanish woman, gaining Spanish citizenship. He found the UK a particularly convenient environment, describing years later in his writings how “among the Islamists, you will find everyone from Shaykh Muhammad Surur [a leading Syrian cleric who opposed the use of violence to create an Islamic state] to the jihadis, and lately it has become a refuge for everyone. . . . I found that being in London during that period would place you at the center of events.”

This perception of a permissive environment in the UK caused tensions within Europe. French authorities were especially furious that networks they linked to attacks in France had deep footprints in the UK. The term “Londonistan” was coined around this time, in the mid- to late 1990s.

The shoe bombers, however, were something different. They were both born and raised British, yet they had made the same choices as the transient Middle Easterners. It also turned out that they were not unique. The continent was struck by a series of large-scale spectacular attacks, including the 2004 Madrid bombings that killed 191 people and the 2005 London bombings that murdered another 52. Both of these plots had links to al-Qaeda; the London plot was directed by the organization. But the attacks were undertaken for the most part by cells of individuals with long histories in Spain and the UK, often born there and seemingly well

integrated. A number of other plots disrupted by security services around the same time demonstrated the depth of the problem that Europe faced.

HEMIGROWN EXTREMISM, LONE ACTORS

These so-called homegrown terrorists became the dominant part of the European threat picture for the next decade or so, all the way to 2015. In January of that year, Paris was rocked by the murders of several members of satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo's* editorial staff in an attack by a pair of gunmen linked to al-Qaeda in Yemen. Then in November, Paris was hit again, harder, with a full-scale, city-wide assault by a 10-man team dispatched by ISIS in Syria. They indiscriminately murdered 130 Parisians who had been enjoying a Friday evening out. Though the organizations (al-Qaeda and ISIS) involved in sending the attackers were different, the community of young, radicalized French citizens (often second-generation immigrants) from which they recruited was largely the same.

For some time, European authorities had struggled to find ways of managing the threat posed by radicalized young Europeans trained in Syria, Afghanistan, or Iraq and sent back to kill, or by young Europeans radicalized by foreign ideas and persuaded to try to stage attacks at home against their native countries. Yet 2015 proved to be the apex for this sort of threat.

Though 2016 and 2017 saw many dozens killed in Europe in a variety of terrorist incidents, these were less coordinated and directed than the dramatic attacks of 2015. The perpetrators were not networks or cells dispatched from foreign battlefields, but rather were isolated, radicalized individuals lashing out at society. Some had clear links to larger terrorist networks; ISIS in particular became extraordinarily adept at manipulating young people through social media into launching attacks. In some cases, there was evidence of direction through communications apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, or Surespot. In other instances, rather than having any direct link to ISIS, the perpetrators were aping what they interpreted to be the characteristics of an ISIS attack.

In fact, what ISIS was doing was the industrialization of something that had been happening in Europe for some time already. The idea of isolated individuals launching attacks inspired by extremist ideologies was not new. In the spring of 1999,

Europe struggled to manage the threat posed by radicalized young Europeans.

London was rocked by a series of nail bombs left in public places associated with minorities (people of color, South Asians, and the LGBT community). The last bomb killed three people in a pub in Soho. The investigation revealed that a young man on the fringes of extreme right-wing communities had staged the attacks on his own. In May 2002, a left-wing activist murdered prominent Dutch right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, infuriated by what he perceived as Fortuyn's anti-Muslim rhetoric. And in September 2003, a Serbian-Swede stabbed and killed Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh as she was shopping in a Stockholm department store. Though his exact motive was never uncovered, the murderer claimed that he hated politicians in general.

The same trend started to emerge among Islamists soon thereafter. In November 2004, a member of a radicalized community of young Dutchmen assaulted and killed filmmaker Theo van Gogh in the street in Amsterdam, angered by his provocative films about Islam. The assassin proved to be part of a wider network, but it was never entirely clear whether the attack was directed or rather was the act of a single individual from within the group.

Starting in 2007, the phenomenon manifested itself in the UK in a series of lone-actor plots undertaken by radicalized individuals, some of whom appeared to have been linked only very loosely to any organized group, or even to any religious affiliation. In two prominent cases, the perpetrators were Muslim converts with a limited understanding of the religion in whose name they purported to act. One of them later decided that he was in fact a member of the extreme right, while serving a prison sentence for planning to detonate a suicide vest at a shopping center in Bristol.

Al-Qaeda sought to stimulate this trend further through its English-language magazine *Inspire* and videos aimed at younger followers. But it was never quite able to claim a causal link of responsibility between any individual lone actors and its propaganda. In contrast, the emergence of ISIS in 2013 led to a surge in exhortations to supporters to launch attacks with whatever tools they found around them. In September 2014, ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani released such a message to followers of the group: "If you are not able to find an [improvised explosive device] or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of their allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run

him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him. Do not lack. Do not be contemptible."

This blood-curdling message came alongside a proliferation of plots that included both isolated, radicalized Europeans and people who were in communication with ISIS fighters in Syria and Iraq. Using social media applications, these fighters in the Levant steered followers in Europe into launching attacks against fellow citizens. Among the key online influencers were Europeans such as Briton Junaid Hussain and Frenchman Rachid Kassim. There was a noticeable impact in Europe, with a series of dramatic attacks as well as large numbers of detentions.

MIGRATION TENSIONS

All of this played out against the double crisis of the war in Syria and the migration wave that arrived across Europe in 2015. European unity was pushed to its limits as hundreds of thousands of migrants from across the wider Middle East and North Africa entered the continent and sought refuge. Their stories of human misery were offset by stories of crime and violence committed by some of the new arrivals. Even worse, among them were some individuals who went on to launch terrorist attacks.

Two of the eventual attackers involved in the ISIS-directed November 2015 assault on Paris slipped in amid the flow of migrants, masquerading as Syrian refugees. Other cases involved individuals launching isolated attacks. July 2016 brought two attacks in quick succession in Germany: one in which a Syrian asylum seeker blew himself up outside a music festival in Ansbach, and another in which a 17-year-old Afghan who had arrived in the country only a year earlier stabbed a family visiting from Hong Kong on a train in Würzburg. Soon after the train assailant was shot down by police, ISIS released a video in which the attacker pledged his allegiance to the group.

These sorts of cases were fodder for politicians and ideologues across Europe as the migrant issue melded with fears of Islamist terrorism. The link between these two issues was familiar. In the UK, a group called the English Defence League (EDL) emerged in 2009, seeking to rally the native English population to push back against the perceived Muslim invaders. One Norwegian who reportedly visited some of the EDL's marches in 2010 went on to launch a terrorist attack in Oslo in July 2011. After detonating a large bomb in the downtown government district, he proceeded to

Utoya, an island outside the capital where the youth wing of the ruling left-wing Labor Party was running a summer camp, and gunned down dozens, mostly teenagers. His attack left 77 dead. The 1,400-page screed he published online concurrently with the attack cited right-leaning ideologues, experts on violent Islamist terrorism, and more to justify fighting back against what he described as the invading hordes of Muslims who were destroying Europe, and were being allowed in by a feckless political class unwilling to stand up for European values.

Although few sympathized with Anders Behring Breivik's heinous acts, the sentiments he articulated were increasingly widespread, and were being adopted at more prominent political levels. Parties like the National Front in France, Alternative for Deutschland in Germany, Law and Justice in Poland, and the UK Independence Party were at the further-right edge of a growing movement across Europe of mainstream political parties (mostly right-leaning) that saw anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment as a core value of their political base. Mainstream politicians on the more traditional right struggled to respond to public anger over perceptions of uncontrolled migration, and the problems that came with it, without spilling into xenophobia.

This tension in turn expressed itself in two ways: a strengthening of the far-right parties in polls, as they seemed to be the only ones willing to talk about issues people were worried about; and a growing sense of embattlement among migrant communities. These trends mobilized extremists on both sides, supplying justification for further attacks as well as emboldening those who previously had felt marginalized.

The pressure on Europe's social fabric was immense, exacerbated by the tendency of violent Islamists to frequently target cultural institutions. There was a long history of such cultural conflict in Europe. In February 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran's spiritual leader, had issued a fatwa calling for the death of UK-based author Salman Rushdie for his novel *The Satanic Verses*. The result was a series of attacks in Europe and around the world linked to the book, and decades of hiding and security details for the author. In 2004 came the murder of Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam, and in 2005 an uproar when Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* published

a series of cartoons of the prophet Muhammad that were deemed blasphemous. The newspaper and its cartoonists have been targets ever since, though they have avoided the fate of the *Charlie Hebdo* editorial staff members who were murdered in their offices in January 2015 after the magazine republished the Danish cartoons.

This string of cultural and physical assaults was linked to a transformational wave of migration that was changing the very way Europe looked. The attacks often targeted people who would traditionally be associated with the liberal left of European society and with advocacy for a more open approach to migration.

All of this played out against intra-European political tensions, as countries in different parts of the continent increasingly saw the centralized control exerted by the European Union as a stricture rather than a boon. In the UK, this culminated in the 2016 Brexit referendum in which voters narrowly decided to leave the EU. Brexit was not solely about migration, but the issue played an important role in the referendum campaign. European identity was

fragmenting, just as the United States elected Donald Trump as its president—a man who openly sided with extreme right elements in Europe and treated Muslims as if they were all part of an extremist sect

associated with al-Qaeda and ISIS.

A rising extreme right increasingly aped and mirrored violent Islamist groups. Some groups openly copied each other. The UK's now-banned neo-Nazi group National Action expressed rage at Muslims while calling for a "white jihad." One member who randomly tried to kill a Sikh dentist in a shop just outside London was obsessed with the infamous ISIS videos in which a British jihadist, later nicknamed Jihadi John, threatened America and its allies before decapitating hostages. In turn, violent Islamist groups pointed to the rise of the far right as evidence of widespread hatred of Muslims, and therefore as justification for terrorist acts against Europe.

IDEOLOGY RECEDES

But then, ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic's arrival, a newer pattern started to come into focus. Increasingly, in reports of terrorist attacks in Europe from around 2018 onward, terms like "mental health" or "autism spectrum disorder" started to appear. Individuals previously described as

A rising extreme right increasingly mirrored violent Islamist groups.

terrorists were now being classified as people suffering from mental health issues, or as neurodivergent. In many of these cases, even when an attack was clearly intended to look like a terrorist act, authorities struggled to understand whether the perpetrator was genuinely motivated by any ideology.

On New Year's Eve at the end of 2018, a Somali-born 26-year-old man who had been raised in the Netherlands started attacking people at random in Manchester's Victoria train station in northern England. He shouted "Allahu Akbar" and raved about events in Syria as he carried out the attack. He injured three before being subdued by authorities. Police initially sent him to a hospital. He was subsequently charged for attempted murder with terrorist links.

The investigation revealed that the attacker had a history of paranoid schizophrenia, leading to a series of encounters with mental health units in Somalia and the UK. In the runup to his attack, he had been frantically circulating a confused manifesto that blended violent Islamist ideologies with conspiracy theories involving mind control. Yet he had been an engineering student and had won a prestigious internship at Rolls-Royce. His friends said they were shocked by his act, deeming it entirely out of character.

By 2021, this sort of attack had become increasingly common. In various cases, it was mixed in with a rising number of confusing ideological backgrounds. Perpetrators no longer seemed to have a coherent motivation based on only one ideology (or any external direction), but often created highly idiosyncratic ideologies that pulled in ideas from a wide range of sources.

The caseloads faced by authorities were growing and confusing. Some cases were hard to separate from more traditional instances of lone, angry individuals simply lashing out at society. School shooters or random mass attackers now looked a lot like part of the terrorist milieu that was being monitored by police and security services. In the UK, the confusion had escalated to such a point that the Home Office created an entirely new category, labeling a growing number of cases as originating in "mixed, unstable, or unclear" ideology, as distinct from the more classical left-wing, right-wing, and violent Islamist ideologies.

In large part, many experts and officials suspect that the problem is driven by the Internet and the easy accessibility of ideas it provides, along with

accepting online communities and polarizing sentiments. This has made adopting terrorist ideologies easier and empowered a whole new group of people who previously struggled to make contact with others in person. Online they can reinvent themselves in ways that are unimaginable in real life.

PERENNIAL PROBLEMS

The wider problem for Europe, however, is that the older, more coherent form of terrorism linked to ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the violent ideas they espoused has not completely gone away. Europeans were reminded of the impact of this sort of violence in 2020, as a series of attacks in the latter half of the year shook the continent.

The first one came in September, when a young, relatively newly arrived Pakistani migrant in Paris attacked two men smoking cigarettes outside the old offices of *Charlie Hebdo*. The attack took place just as the trial of defendants linked to the 2015 attack on the magazine's staff was starting. It was a grim reminder to France that Islamist extremism did not forget its enemies, even though the perpetrator in this case actually linked his attack to a fundamentalist Muslim sect in Pakistan rather than al-Qaeda or ISIS. The incident suggested that even the violent Islamist threat was multiplying in new, threatening ways.

Even worse was to come a month later. In a Paris suburb, a teenage Chechen resident decapitated a teacher in the middle of a street. The assailant was then shot down as he charged at police officers. The teacher, Samuel Paty, had already been the subject of threats from parents at the school where he taught. They accused him of forcing his students to view images of the Prophet Muhammad and discuss matters that disturbed their religious sensitivities in class. These threats had spilled online, where they were noticed by the young, radicalized Chechen. He was in contact with fighters in Syria and had sought to go and join them.

Those two attacks were not the first that year in Europe, or even in France. The continent had already seen three attacks in France, two in Germany, and at least three in the UK. But these two in France had a particularly totemic aspect to them, aggravating culture war narratives and highlighting the menace that still existed five years after the traumatic 2015 attacks. They seemed to be directed at the most fundamental republican values of liberty, freedom of the press, and the

separation of church and state. Their impact resonated around the continent, leading to calls for greater restrictions on religious expression (such as dress and the content of preachers' messages) and providing further opportunities to right-wing politicians.

A November 2020 incident in Vienna seemed to hearken back to an even more dangerous threat. A young man with deep connections and contacts among Europe's radicalized Islamist youth went on a shooting rampage through the center of the city, killing four people. He also released images and a statement linking his attack to ISIS. It turned out that he was the latest in a long line of radicalized young European men who were known to authorities, but nonetheless were able to carry out terrorist attacks. He was deeply entrenched in the ISIS-supporting milieu around the continent and unsuccessfully tried to travel to Syria to become a fighter, then decided to launch his attack in Europe.

Yet time has shown how the threat has in fact stayed relatively static. The initial concerns over the Vienna attack remain, but the network has been rolled up, with arrests of militants linked to the plot in Germany, Poland, Italy, Switzerland, Albania, and elsewhere. The attacks in France were dramatic and intensified domestic tensions, but ultimately were not replicated. Nonetheless, these incidents all served to highlight how Europe is still at the ideological and practical front line of the jihadist threat in its many forms. It may be that attacks on the scale of those in Madrid in 2004, London in 2005, or Paris in 2015 are now in the past, but the Paty murder showed how scale and volume are not prerequisites for impact.

The additional problem for Europe is that this is no longer the only terrorist threat it faces. The threat from the extreme right was considered marginal in the past. As one former head of Britain's internal security service MI5, Sir Jonathan Evans, put it, he saw them largely as a "zoological" curiosity during his time leading the service, from 2007 to 2013. Now they occupy a growing portion of police and intelligence attention.

French authorities have disrupted far-right plots intended to overthrow and execute President Emmanuel Macron. In June 2019 in Germany, a neo-Nazi extremist murdered local politician Walter Lübcke. In Belgium, in May 2021, an

extreme right-wing member of the special forces ran away from his base laden with weapons after threatening a senior public health official whom he saw as part of a conspiracy linked to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. A young Frenchman was arrested in late 2021 for allegedly trying to source uranium powder on eBay, which he planned to incorporate into pipe bombs he had built at home. When police raided the studio he had rented in Rouffach, in northeastern France, they found "Nazi badges and a complete Ku Klux Klan outfit in sight on a mannequin." The 26-year-old had been flagged to authorities after he boasted to his college classmates about what he had built. He was also reported to have suffered from undefined "psychiatric disorders."

At the other end of the scale, European security forces found that a growing number of their own members belonged to extreme right-wing groups. In Belgium, a large network linking politicians, soldiers, and activists was discovered in 2021. In the UK, a policeman was jailed for membership in a neo-Nazi group, while a special forces unit in Frankfurt had to be disbanded in June 2021. In other parts of Germany, groups of police officers were detained on similar charges.

This is the threat that Europe now faces: a baffling mix of classic threats, lone-actor attacks that pop up with persistent regularity all over the continent, and highly dangerous plotters. Many cases seem confused in both ideology and motivation, with mental health problems or neurodivergency increasingly the norm. But all of this is still striking at the heart of European identity and ideals, and playing out against a backdrop where migration remains a highly charged issue and political polarization is at high levels. The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have exacerbated the situation, pushing people online for longer periods, leading to greater exposure to extremist ideas. Anti-vaccination narratives have taken off as a rallying cry for those seeking an anti-establishmentarian cause to join.

Twenty years on from 9/11, Europe may not face the same sort of threat it used to, but the problems associated with terrorism, extremism, and societal polarization appear to have become even more ingrained and menacing. They are likely shaping the continent's political outlook for the decades to come. ■

“[P]recisely because they are part of the same genus, Poland’s and indeed Europe’s right-wing populism is as toxic as fascism. Denying this is exactly what enables it to grow.”

REN PILL Politics in Poland

DAVID OST

“The problem is that Hitler gave fascism a bad name.”

—A PiS supporter overheard at a public political discussion, 2016

In early 2016, soon after the Law and Justice Party (PiS) came to power in Poland, turned state-run media into promoters of racist nationalism, and began cracking down on judicial independence, the Warsaw-based Holocaust scholar Joanna Tokarska-Bakir asked, “At what point in the introduction of fascism in Poland will we be allowed to use that term?” She and the few others who were already using it were being roundly criticized even by PiS’s staunchest opponents for deploying this “nuclear option” of political discourse.

The rationale of the naysayers—the same objection we hear wherever far-right illiberal forces are making a plausible claim to power—is that fascism means paramilitaristic dictatorship and is not applicable otherwise. Tokarska-Bakir was pointing to the obvious counterargument: that fascism is not built in a day, and that naming the tendency might help impede it.

In the six years since, that debate has not abated. When the government speaks and acts violently, or endorses those who do, the charge of “fascism” recurs almost naturally. Critics deployed the term repeatedly in late 2021, as a result of the government’s anti-humanitarian handling of a refugee crisis on the eastern border and its cozying up to thuggish nationalists.

When Belarus cynically invited migrants, mostly from Iraq, to cross its scarcely guarded forest border with Poland, this presented a challenge to the

Polish authorities. But the government’s wildly disproportionate response was aimed at provoking maximum internal fear to justify broad repressive measures. It characterized the refugees as terrorists and moral degenerates literally waging war on Poland, declared a state of emergency, and brought in the army. It ordered all border patrols not only to guard against unauthorized entry, but to round up and force back into the Belarusian forests, without administering emergency first aid, even those cold and hungry families who had already entered Poland and thus, according to international law, had a right to apply for asylum. By December 2021, officially 10 to 20 migrants, and unofficially many more, had already died from cold and hunger.

PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński had deployed the most dehumanizing rhetoric against Muslim refugees in his 2015 electoral campaign, accusing them of carrying germs dangerous to Europeans, in language similar to that used against Jews in the 1930s. Now that this rhetoric was leading to actual deaths on the border, “fascism” seemed to many a fully apt label.

With its conservative Catholic orientation, PiS calls to mind not the church-skeptic fascism of Italy or Germany, but that of Spain’s Francisco Franco, whom PiS supporters have long claimed as a hero. This is evident in the nature of the nationalist thugs PiS supports. Starting in the early 2010s, a zealous, ostensibly church-loving paramilitary wing of the extreme right has tried to claim sole authority over Independence Day commemorations. Its muscled activists, chanting “Death to the Enemies of the Fatherland,” have physically threatened liberals and leftists, attacked Gay Pride marches, and ripped up sidewalks for stones to throw at police trying to restore order.

In 2021, the group was required by the liberal Warsaw municipal authorities to alter its traditional marching route because an anti-fascist organization

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had already been granted a legal permit. The PiS national government stepped in and announced that it was now sponsoring the march. News reports that the self-proclaimed “National Guardians” had already received millions in state subsidies sufficed to convince plenty of skeptics that it was indeed high time to ring the fascist alarm.

Yet the “fascist” label is a trap. In the quarter-century from 1920 to 1945, tens if not hundreds of millions proudly proclaimed their allegiance to the fascist cause. Within days after Hitler’s suicide in his bunker, almost no one did. Although historians have been at pains to show differences between National Socialism and Mussolini’s Fascism, World War II ensured that only Hitler and the Third Reich would become the litmus test of fascism. Because it is such an impossible standard to meet, today even fascists can say they are merely conservatives. Is there any way to make sense of this? Is it worth trying?

In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant argued that on some fundamental questions, such as whether God exists or the universe is finite, the most “pure” rational mind must say both yes and no. These he called antinomies of reason: a foolproof case can be made for either side. Adjudicating the charge of fascism against today’s increasingly radical right, whether in Poland, Hungary, Brazil, or the United States, seems to lead us precisely to such an antinomy.

These contemporary examples display a great many similarities to the playbook of classic fascist movements when they strove for power: the glorification of “the nation” (and their insistence that only they represent it), the emphasis on its humiliations, the contempt for law, the delegitimation of political rivals as “traitors,” the unabashed lying, the no-holds-barred efforts to prevent the opposition from winning. In his book *The Anatomy of Fascism*, historian Robert Paxton periodizes fascism according to four stages: creating the movement, taking root, getting power, and exercising power. The first two are visible in a variety of countries, and the last two already in a few, including Poland.

And yet for most people, fascism means only terror and dictatorship. If they’re not arresting and killing you, they can’t be fascists. They might say terrible things and lay the groundwork for a system

where the label would apply, but unless they’re actually shooting and disappearing people, then the term doesn’t apply—or so the argument goes.

Kant proposed to escape the trap of the antinomies by acknowledging that certain questions cannot be answered and proposing to look at the matter from a different angle entirely. We ought to do the same here.

FAMILIAR FEATURES

Rather than quarrel endlessly over whether or not the present moment marks a return to fascism—a quarrel that only allows the far right to grow—we need to change the question and try to understand the genus to which both historic “fascism” and contemporary “right-wing populism” belong.

Let’s call it REN PILL, to stand for Right-wing Exclusionary Nationalist Popular Illiberalism. This is a tweak of the alt-right’s boasts of having “taken the red pill,” a reference to the 1999 film *The Matrix*. Choosing to take a red pill allows the protagonist to finally see things for what they

really are, rather than how the “elites” (the liberals and the left, in the global alt-right’s framing) want everyone to view the world. But the acronym covers all the key political and ideological features that unite both fas-

cism and right-wing populism, leaving the specific features of how they package and maintain their rule—such as whether to accept formal democracy or use mass repression—to be discussed separately.

Both yesterday’s fascism and today’s “right-wing populism” subscribe to REN PILL. They are right-wing in that they believe in hierarchies and hate the idea of equality, especially political equality. Some types of people ought to rule over others, they believe. This is why they always seek to delegitimize the opposition and do not calmly (or sometimes at all) accept defeat.

They are nationalist in an exclusionary rather than inclusive way. Not all long-time inhabitants of a land deserve the same rights; not even all citizens do. Everything depends on whether they belong to the dominant “nation.” That is a construct whose boundaries only the nationalists get to decide, and it always includes race or ethnicity and creed or culture. You are not part of the nation, and do not deserve the same treatment

*The government characterized
refugees as terrorists and
moral degenerates.*

from the state, if you are not part of the dominant ethnic group the state valorizes.

Nor are you a legitimate member of the nation if you do not believe the way you are supposed to—in other words, if you are part of the left. REN PILL politics not only defines international relations as “our nation” versus everyone else, but defines domestic relations the same way, constructing some citizens as real or potential traitors. These “others” may not always be harassed, but they are always on notice that they are alien and inferior, preemptively justifying any eventual mistreatment that may be meted out by the “real” nation.

REN PILL politics is populist, and tries to be popular. This was the historic innovation of fascism. Until the 1920s, the political right by definition was elitist, wary of or opposed to participation by the broad “masses.” If you wanted “common people” to have an impact on politics, you were on the left. The fascists turned that around, welcoming the unwashed masses into politics, boasting and acting like they, too, were just regular, common, angry men of the nation.

Today’s so-called populists highlight this feature above all, claiming to reject existing elites while working to build new elites of people like them—and people *who* like them. Unlike all other right-wing movements, which have appealed to and aimed to protect established interests, whether rural or urban, landed or industrial, the REN PILL right appeals to nonelites, offering them symbolic as well as tangible benefits, provided they belong to the favored “nation.” PiS, for example, has introduced generous cash payments to parents of children under 18, whereas in Hungary, social policy has catered to the lower middle class, with programs devised to avoid supporting the persecuted Roma minority. Even fascism, of course, tried to be “nice” to its nonelites. As German historian Götz Aly has shown, Aryan workers who did not challenge the Third Reich could benefit quite handsomely from the Nazi welfare state and the plundering of others.

REN PILLers are both illiberal and anti-liberal. They claim an unshakable certainty as to what’s right and what’s wrong, what’s true and what’s false. They view pluralism as dangerous relativism. They are for authority, not for questioning authority (unless the left is in power). They want limits on personal freedoms. They reject any constraints on power, as long as they have power.

If classic fascism and contemporary right-wing populism are so similar, yet so different, that is

because REN PILL, like liberalism, conservatism, socialism, or any movement seeking to dominate, must adapt to the society it aims to lead. Fascism could deploy mass violence in the 1920s because European societies were so used to violence. Most men had just fought in a war marked by close-up battles. In many of the places where regimes toppled, the new one resulted from new armed battles.

The cult of violence that could galvanize support in the aftermath of World War I cannot do so among the demilitarized lives of today. REN PILL could wage open war against democracy back then, at a time when democracy was new for much of Europe and, after the Great Depression wreaked such economic and political havoc, was widely seen as having failed. It cannot so openly oppose democracy today, when almost every Westerner alive grew up in states that officially valued democracy (even the Soviet bloc states called themselves “people’s democracies”), and after the rise of welfare states led to the association of democracy with prosperity. Any social or political movement hoping to succeed must frame its message in accord with society’s expectations, so of course REN PILL today is not going to be exactly like the fascism of yesterday.

ENEMIES OF THE NATION

PiS has brought an antidemocratic REN PILL approach to politics ever since its first stint in power in 2005–7 at the head of a coalition government. Soon after his electoral success, Kaczyński gave a February 2006 speech in parliament outlining his vision of politics. He began by attacking all non-PiS political actors, inside and outside parliament, as enemies of the nation and as part of a giant web of corruption. The main opposition party was trying to sell out the country to German interests. Bureaucrats wary of PiS attempts to purge the judiciary and civil service were part of a “criminal defense front.” Journalists opposing PiS were “liars.” And all public figures opposed to PiS he denounced as members of the *układ*, a key Kaczyński term signifying both “clique” and “the establishment.”

As the journalist Jacek Żakowski pointed out at the time in the liberal weekly *Polityka*, Kaczyński says he’s for democracy. He says it all the time. But the question is: With this vision of politics, why should anyone *want* democracy? If politics is black and white, if you alone are good while your opponents are “thieves and swindlers” betraying the nation, then you shouldn’t *allow* democracy.

Of course, no direct attack on democracy is possible today, given the Western consensus on its centrality, and particularly its importance to the European Union. But Poland has been chipping away at it steadily since 2015, particularly in its clash with the EU over the rule of law. PiS's first substantial move upon taking power in 2015 was to unconstitutionally take control of the Constitutional Court. The court itself ruled the effort unconstitutional, but the government rejected the court's decision on the grounds that only it, and not any independent institution, gets to decide what is in the true interests of "the nation." In October 2021, the now-subordinated Constitutional Court ruled that it has the final say over the EU Court of Justice, challenging the EU legal order. When the EU responded by considering sanctions and the withholding of funds from Poland, the PiS parliamentary leader said the British had the right idea when they left the EU—forcing others in the government to deny to a very pro-EU populace that a Polish "exit" was on the agenda.

This combination of attack and concession, two steps forward and one step back, is strategic. REN PILL governments seek to undercut internal and external opposition by the unpredictability of their policies—strong blows, followed by pliant concessions, a zigzag that disorients opponents, leading them to think a stable compromise is at hand. In the end, it is not the specifics of every PiS measure that matters, but the sheer, open instrumentality of political lawmaking: the courts and all state institutions must do the government's bidding, and any officials who cannot be relied on must be removed.

If Kaczyński does not attack democracy directly, PiS ideologues do. One of their most important theorists is Ryszard Legutko, a professor of ancient philosophy in Kraków and a long-time PiS deputy in the European Parliament. Since 1989, Legutko has been making the astounding claim—most recently in his 2012 book *The Demon in Democracy*, endorsed by *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat as an emblematic statement of the European New Right—that the problem with liberal democracy is that it is basically the same as communism. This is a particularly brash and implausible argument to make, given PiS's commitment to eliminating independent institutions. But Legutko does not reject communism for its

lack of democracy. He acknowledges that liberal democracy has a multiparty system and political and economic liberties that are lacking in state socialist societies. What Legutko sees as the intolerable similarity of the two systems lies in their belief in progress, their campaigns for modernization, and their dangerous commitment to, in his words, "change reality for the better."

Legutko thus harks back to all the nineteenth-century critics of the Enlightenment who warned darkly of the specter of democracy. For Legutko, the problem is "people's attitudes"; the "mores" of democratic societies teach citizens that full rights and respect for all are legitimate aspirations. Liberal democracy gets people to fight against "xenophobia, nationalism, intolerance, bigotry." What is needed instead, he argues, is an embrace of the past, of the "old bonds" that gave society a common structure, and individuals their place within it.

True, Legutko only denounces "liberal democracy." But nowhere does he endorse any other kind of democracy. Indeed, it's hard to see how he could. He specifically rejects the idea that a just polity should allow the equal promulgation of diverse views. If all views are accepted as legitimate, then there's no sense in anything, he argues, and no way for people to know which is better.

Legutko agrees here with Alain de Benoist, the intellectual guru of the French New Right, that cultures (that is, nations) have their own coherent internal essence, and that those who are not part of a given culture should not be able to influence it. As to who belongs to which culture, this view holds that the state, and not citizens, decides that key question. This is a position that served as the official defense of South African apartheid. Generalized as it is by Benoist and Legutko, it is distinguishable from classic fascism only in its insistence that it is defending "cultures," not "races."

About a decade ago, the political theorist Corey Robin made a splash with his book *The Reactionary Mind*, arguing that ever since the French Revolution inaugurated the rise of democracy, conservatism has been focused on restoring an anti-democratic past, and not on "conserving" anything except the relics of an old order or the tools needed to reinstate it. That Legutko appears so anxious to confirm the charge only shows the

*Anti-democrats say they like
democracy just for Poles.*

boldness of the contemporary REN PILL campaign. Confronted with the regrettable (to them) widespread belief in democracy, REN PILL adherents throughout the West seek to discredit democracy by associating it with minority and “outsider” groups. They expect the dominant ethnic-racial mainstream to have qualms about the presence of such groups, especially at times of economic insecurity.

So, like Trump adviser Steve Bannon’s recipe to discredit a democratic consensus in the United States (“I want [our opponents] to talk about racism every day”), PiS and its right-wing supporters have directed their most brutal and violent rhetoric against Muslims, refugees, the LGBT community, and even to some extent Jews—the one group whom the post-World War II European right has generally taken pains not to denounce, in order to distance itself from classic fascism. The inevitable result is that the opposition denounces the toxic discourse and defends the basic humanity of the targeted, at which point the state media portrays defenders of liberal democracy as fundamentally “anti-Polish,” since they defend everyone except “normal Poles.”

In many ways, PiS here is simply following the model set in Hungary by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whose slanderous attacks on defenseless groups, whether Roma, refugees, or gays, have been designed to force liberals, who push back against such attacks, to be identified in the popular imagination with unpopular causes. Orbán has taken this tactic to new lows with his frequent claims that philanthropist George Soros’s calls for a humanitarian approach to the refugee crisis are merely a cover for an attempt to flood Europe with Muslim immigrants in order to replace “real” Europeans, Christians, with “cheap” Muslim labor. In 2020, a prominent Orbán official described Soros, himself a Jewish refugee from Hungary, as a “liberal führer” using Europe as his personal “gas chamber,” with “normal” Poles and Hungarians as the “new Jews.”

These attacks on humanitarianism as simply a cover for treachery—a tactic picked up not only by PiS in Poland but by Trumpists with their attacks on “sanctuary cities” or by former Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in criminalizing the rescuing of refugees at sea—are a particularly disturbing echo of classic fascism. They cast even moderate liberals as traitors and present pitiless cold-heartedness as the only justifiable policy for treatment of “others.”

NATIONAL DEMOCRACY?

Of course, even to insinuate that Poland has a fascist tradition that is now reappearing in a “populist” form drives PiS supporters mad. “How can we be fascists? We too were the victims of fascism,” they say, alluding to the Nazis’ occupation of Poland. The paradox is that these same people who supposedly so hate fascism simultaneously heap endless praise on far-right Polish politicians and eliminationist anti-Semites from the 1930s and ’40s who themselves boasted of their kinship to fascism.

Their chief political hero from the past is Roman Dmowski, leader of the powerful National Democrats in the interwar period. This is the kind of democracy anti-democrats say they like: “national democracy,” or democracy just for Poles. Dmowski was as clear as Hitler ever was that a strong national state could not include Jews. Dmowski thought that Ukrainians could possibly be forced to assimilate. (Poland could not, he believed, accept them as a separate minority.) Jews, however, he regarded as a subversive presence, uniquely incapable of assimilating: “Even if Jews were angels and geniuses . . . it would still be necessary to get rid of them, as their mere presence among us is suicidal for our society.”

“Whenever I’ve tried to imagine the future of the Polish state,” wrote Dmowski in the summer of 1933, just months after Hitler’s coming to power, “one big problem comes to the fore”: the “horribly large percentage” of Jews. “The first condition for building a strong state, based on a healthy and sturdy society, is the elimination [*usunięcie*] of this problem from our lives.” He thus praised Hitler’s “national revolution” for “setting in motion the planned, consistent process of eliminating Jewry from European society, a process that will not stop with Germany.”

“Fascism,” Dmowski concluded, “is the first great attempt to do real battle against the political crisis of our civilization.”

This is the figure whom the PiS government so honors. It has set up a Roman Dmowski Institute for the Study of Nationalist Thought, and the above quotes come from a Dmowski classic recently reprinted by the state-sponsored National Center of Culture, and made available for free via Creative Commons.

PiS’s much-touted “historical politics,” or the state-sponsored interpretation of history aimed at instilling the “correct” national consciousness among Poles today, promotes Dmowski only as its

favorite statesman of the past. Among its “regular” heroes, the favorites are the so-called Accursed Soldiers, who refused to put down their weapons when World War II came to an end and continued the fight against communism. As non-PiS historians point out, many of these same “freedom fighters” also targeted Jews lucky enough to have survived the war, in line with the National Democratic view that Jews as such were a threat to a strong Poland. In fact, virtually all PiS heroes come from the ranks of the interwar political right, a milieu in which Mussolini and fascism in general were looked upon as models.

In a sense, it is “thanks” to Hitler that the Polish right’s reputation, despite its eliminationist nationalist legacy, has been saved and remains available to be used for posterity. By never giving Poland the opportunity to form a collaborationist government (its location separating Germany from the Soviet Union meant that he could never accept a formally independent Polish state), Hitler allowed, and in a sense continues to allow, the Polish right to deny its fascist past, given that Nazism has become the sole public marker of fascism. Indeed, so concerned is PiS with denying Poland’s own past fascist tendencies that in 2018 it passed a law, later withdrawn under withering foreign criticism, that made it a crime for anyone, in print or in speech, to accuse “the Polish nation or state of responsibility or co-responsibility” for Nazi crimes against Jews.

Precious few are those who, like the PiS supporter cited in the epigraph to this essay, will honestly confess a sympathy for “fascism.” This individual understood that the precursor of the right-wing populism he favors today was precisely classic fascism, sympathy for which Hitler destroyed by waging world war.

The only party willing to step into classic pro-fascist territory is *Konfederacja*, formed in 2018 as a coalition between the openly nationalist and anti-Semitic National Movement and the authoritarian, masculinist, pro-market Liberty party. Krzysztof Bosak, *Konfederacja*’s 2020 candidate for president, once proudly posted on his Facebook site that one of those “test your political views” Internet quizzes showed him to be “closest to fascism,” to which his only comment was, “No surprises.”

In the elections of 2019, *Konfederacja* broke PiS’s monopoly on the political right by winning 6.8 percent of the vote for a total of 11 parliamentary seats. PiS has responded to this new challenge in different ways. Sometimes it presents itself as the sensible choice for right-wingers wary of outright

fascism, as when it denounced *Konfederacja*’s openly anti-Semitic 2021 Independence Day rally. More often, however, it seeks to outbid *Konfederacja*’s extremism, as when Kaczyński speaks of the EU as a potential “Fourth Reich,” or when, in 2021, PiS engineered a total ban on abortion.

TOXIC GROWTHS

The problem is that this fundamental ambivalence of the Polish right toward the legacy of its own anti-Semitism creates a huge blind spot in any historical understanding of fascism that would prevent its recurrence. This ambivalence allows the contemporary right to denounce Muslims, refugees, or “gender ideology” with unalloyed intensity, and to pretend to itself that it is not thereby promoting a fascist revival.

The result of this self-contradictory muddle is that Tokarska-Bakir, the Holocaust scholar, is no longer feeling so isolated. To her question posed six years ago—“At what point in the introduction of fascism will we be allowed to use the term?”—an increasing number of Poles say: Now.

Because any use of that term is invariably challenged by the indignant denial of the accused—“Do you see us acting like Hitler?”—I suggest we call it *REN PILL* politics instead. But precisely because they are part of the same genus, Poland’s and indeed Europe’s right-wing populism is as toxic as fascism. Denying this is exactly what enables it to grow.

The political theorist Małgorzata Kowalska at the University of Białystok has written of this peculiar dialectics of contemporary fascism. She notes the conundrum: increasing evidence of fascist-like politics, met with vehement denials from *REN PILL* supporters that anything even remotely like fascism is happening. “Fascism,” she observes, “is the specter that continually rises from the grave, only to be continually exorcised. The more we deny its existence, the more intensely it comes back. The more we downplay it, the stronger it returns.”

This is what observers need to keep in mind. Like virtually all *REN PILL* political movements today, PiS constantly flirts with fascism, all the while denying it is doing anything of the kind—since, after all, it is nothing like Hitler. Even so, it undermines democracy, defines rivals as traitors, subordinates the state to the party, endorses racism, limits press freedom, and refuses to renounce its supporters who use violence. Whether it will resist the lure of full-fledged authoritarianism is still not clear. ■

The Mobile Fortress

HOLLY CASE

In Emir Kusturica's 1995 film *Underground*, about Yugoslavia's troubled history from World War II to the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, the final scene is a cheerful reunion of the dead. All who had fought, hurt, abandoned, or destroyed each other in life come together again around a great feasting table, with lively music and flowing rakija. As the camera pans out on the scene, we see the table is set on an island that is adrift, a mobile utopia, inaccessible to any but those who are already on it, and the island's contours seem to have the shape of the also-deceased Yugoslavia.

This scene, with its poignant wish for a reconciliation that can only be hoped for beyond the grave, also expresses a wish for a land apart, an island, bordering on nothing, itself adrift and therefore untouchable. It is a wish that was strange, melancholy, and fanciful in 1995. Now, it seems far more pervasive; the stuff of election campaigns and frenzied news cycles.

* * *

Precarity drives migration. Most people who are willing to pick up everything, risk their lives, uproot their families, and spend more than they have to be somewhere else are running away from a bad situation. The images of refugees on the border of Poland and Belarus in late 2021, freezing outdoors on small pieces of plastic, testify to this fact. You would have to be desperate to be there; and they are.

One reason migrants are so feared is related to why the homeless, orphaned, and mentally ill are feared. Misfortune feels contagious and must therefore be kept at a distance and out of sight. Lepers confined to their islands. The insane to their asylums. What if the precarity they have experienced comes with them?

In 1939, an anti-immigration activist named Alice Waters spoke out against allowing "thousands of motherless, embittered, persecuted" Jewish refugee children into the United States. Americans could not "expect to convert these embattled souls into loyal, loving American citizens. . . . If these so-called innocent, helpless children are admitted as refugees into America, I am sure they will become the leaders of revolt and deprive my children of their right to worship God, of free speech, and of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." It's as if instability itself also had legs to carry it across borders.

NOTHING HAPPENING IN HUNGARY?

Marci Shore, a prominent intellectual historian of East-Central Europe, said in an interview a few years ago that for people in the region, the phrase "Anything is possible" means that you could be stateless tomorrow and find yourself in a camp the day after. The Czech writer Heda Kovály, who herself spent much of World War II in a concentration camp and whose husband was later tried and executed under Stalinism, noted the atmosphere in Prague in the early 1950s, as tens of thousands were being arrested: "People no longer aspired toward things but away from them. . . . Their greatest satisfaction would be that nothing happened."

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has alluded to this historical precarity in making the case for keeping migrants and refugees out of Hungary and Europe. "[W]e are living through times in which anything can happen," he told a sympathetic audience on July 25, 2015. "Who would have thought that Europe would be unable to defend its own borders, even against unarmed refugees?"

"I don't think we can possibly want anything more than that Hungary should remain a safe point in the uncertain world that surrounds us," Orbán concluded, reiterating that "in the world, anything can happen," but "we all want Hungary to be a country where anything can *not* happen."

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This has remained a fairly constant refrain for Orbán since then, as he draws an ever-sharpening distinction between Hungary and the “uncertain world” that he implies lies to the west. He seems particularly preoccupied with casting Europe as a place whose essence is being insidiously substituted with something utterly foreign and alien. In the process, Europe is becoming a source of instability, a tacit reversal of its earlier presumed role. In a speech on July 3, 2021, he said, “The past few years have proven that countries once considered rock solid can teeter on the brink of chaos in a flash.”

With Western Europe unmoored, in his view, Orbán sees a chance for Hungary to move in, to drift toward the center. “Of course we will be the center of the very center,” the late Hungarian intellectual and former dissident György Konrád wrote in his 2013 diary-novel, *Vendégekönyv* (Guest-book). “Once the offices of the EU move from Brussels to Budapest, then we can warm to it.” In this respect, Konrád continued, Orbán “makes it so we can move away from Europe with our heads held high. Not too far, though, because most of the flashy domestic investments are made in European Union money.”

*The wish for a land apart now
seems far more pervasive.*

DEFINING WHO BELONGS

Historically, attempts to transform Hungary into a mobile fortress have been based repeatedly on a peculiar one-two punch, starting first with a large-scale naturalization of migrants, followed by a series of government-directed xenophobic campaigns. In the wake of World War I, after the country shrank by two-thirds, over 200,000 migrants and refugees from the near abroad fled to what was left of Hungary. Among them were many Hungarian-speaking intellectuals and state officials whose livelihoods became difficult or impossible in the newly formed or expanded states of Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. These new arrivals had difficulty finding work in crowded, war-damaged rump Hungary. Whereas in 1914, Hungary had one state official for every 377 inhabitants, by 1921 that number had risen to one for every 134.

Just as the homeland itself had “moved,” so, too, did the definition of who could be considered “Hungarian.” Hungary’s delegates to the postwar peace negotiations laid claim to the 460,000 Jews in the territories Hungary stood to lose, arguing

that “from the ethnic [*faji*] standpoint the Hungarian Jews are no longer Jews, but Hungarians.” When the territories were lost nonetheless, the Hungarian government quickly changed course, on the ground that there was no longer any need to assimilate the Jews in order to bolster the number of Hungarians vis-à-vis other nationalities. Thus the highly assimilated and often intensely patriotic Jews were increasingly cast as outsiders occupying positions to which the “real Hungarians” thought themselves entitled. In 1920, the Hungarian National Assembly enacted what amounted to the first piece of anti-Jewish legislation in post-World War I Europe. The law severely restricted the number of Jews who could receive a university education and thus enter the bourgeois professions.

Not surprisingly, this attitude prevailed even when Hungary recovered some of its lost territories with the help of Nazi Germany. One Hungarian politician in a recovered area of Transylvania said in a speech in the fall of 1942 that “the Jews were never Hungarian and never will be

Hungarian... they are unassimilable.” In the spring and summer of 1944, following the German occupation, Hungarian gendarmes and civil authorities aided in the ghettoization and deportation

of over 440,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz and other labor and death camps. Most of them did not survive.

Nor did the tendency to change definitions of “Hungarian” to accommodate contemporary political aims end with the Holocaust. Of the several million Hungarian speakers born outside the country’s borders since World War I, a steady stream have voted with their feet. From 1960 to 2001, the number of foreign-born individuals living in Hungary increased sixfold, and during the following decade it jumped by another 50,000, to over 140,000, more than half of them from Hungary’s “near abroad.” Most of these refugees and economic migrants from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine consider themselves Hungarians and have settled in Hungary for good.

But the new arrivals have not consistently been considered Hungarians in the eyes of many already living in Hungary. After all, they had abandoned their posts on the fringes of Hungary’s pre-World War I boundaries, the thinking went, and besides, Hungary had its own economic troubles and these

newcomers were taking Hungarians' jobs, using *their* public transportation, going to *their* schools, and not paying any taxes.

In fact, it was Orbán, after his Fidesz party came to power with a two-thirds supermajority in 2010, who changed the tenor of the discussion by promising the recent arrivals citizenship and insisting that they be treated as true Hungarians. This gesture of seeming generosity had its own political motivations. The move secured the gratitude of many self-declared Hungarians from beyond the borders, and because his government had made them citizens, they could vote.

In 2014, Fidesz won its second supermajority with the help of these new citizen-voters, some of whom even continued to live and work and pay taxes beyond Hungary's borders. Orbán marked the occasion at a symbolically charged summer camp for Hungarian students in Romania, where he had been a featured speaker since 1990. He recalled thinking "how beautiful it would be, how noble a form of revenge, if the political forces that voted against reengaging the Hungarians living in the near abroad were deservedly punished by a majority, or even a two-thirds majority, made possible with the votes of those Hungarians from beyond the borders." And that is precisely what happened.

By the time of his July 2015 speech, Orbán's vengeful tone had not diminished: "In 2004 the Hungarian left rejected the Hungarians beyond the border, and now they embrace illegal immigrants with open arms," he said. According to a poll conducted by Publicus Intézet in May 2015, 57 percent of Hungarians considered emigration a greater problem than immigration, and only 23 percent believed the opposite. By July, sentiments had shifted: 42 percent thought emigration to be a greater problem, and 44 percent believed immigration was the bigger threat. By September Fidesz had paid for billboards across the country that read: "The people have spoken: 'The Country Must Be Defended.'"

THE MAN IN THE MOBILE FORTRESS

In his 2018 book *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, the French sociologist Bruno Latour wrote, "[E]ach of us is beginning to feel the ground slip away beneath our feet. We are discovering, more or less obscurely, that we are all in migration toward territories yet to be rediscovered and reoccupied." In short, Latour believes, we are adrift. "Is it possible to make those who are still enthusiastic about globalization understand that it is normal, that it is just, that it is indispensable to want to preserve, maintain, ensure one's belonging to a land, a place, a soil, a community, a space, a milieu, a way of life, a trade, a skill?" he wonders.

In framing the matter in this way, Latour has misconstrued the wish to "preserve, maintain, ensure" belonging as a desire for fixity of both form and content—that boundaries should be fixed, and populations within them. The shifting landscape of "belonging" to the Hungarian nation over the past century belies this assumption. Hungary, including in Orbán's conception, must be able to "move" and to "become." Neither its position nor its composition has ever been fixed.

In a 2007 article on "the populist moment," Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev said, "Unless we take Brecht's advice and dissolve the people in order to elect a new one, populism is and will remain part of the political landscape." As Krastev has since discovered, however, populism is and remains part of the political landscape precisely *because* politicians like Orbán have done just that, choosing their country's electorate "by deciding its migration and electoral laws, and issues of citizenship." The mobile fortress is a model that ostensibly serves the nation, but is mainly about securing the political survival and accumulated assets of corrupt and self-interested leaders. Yet if there is hope for the forces that oppose these men, it lies in this: that nations like Hungary will "move" and "become" in perpetuity. Indeed, Hungary may soon float free of Viktor Orbán. ■

Being Muslim in Modern Yugoslavia

MARC DAVID BAER

“The place of Muslims in Europe is commonly predicated on a fantasy that Islam was not part of European states from the outset,” Emily Greble argues in *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe*. Seen as the antithesis of Europe and European culture, Muslims have long been written out of grand narratives of European history. It is often forgotten that since the eighth century, when they arrived in Spain, Muslims have been indigenous to Europe and part and parcel of European history.

The most significant and long-lived European Muslim dynasty was the Ottoman. As early as the middle of the fourteenth century and as late as the dawn of the First World War, the Ottoman dynasty controlled parts of Central and Southeastern Europe. For the first half of the fifteenth century, the Byzantine city of Adrianople (today Edirne, Turkey) functioned as the seat of the dynasty. Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, served as the Ottoman capital from its conquest in 1453 to the dissolution of the empire in 1923. Over the Ottoman centuries, millions of people in southeastern Europe converted to Islam, while Muslims settled in the region.

Despite these facts, the story that nations such as Greece or Bulgaria and their historians tell of European history rarely includes Muslims in any roles other than outsiders, enemies, and foreign occupiers. If the Ottoman impact on Europe is either unknown or unacknowledged, or seen as an aberration, another reason Muslims of the Balkans are often left out of the telling of the European experience is that Eastern Europe itself is orientalized by Western European and Central European historians.

Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe
Emily Greble
Oxford University Press, 2021

Greble’s aim is to write against this double marginalization of European Muslims and to “reintegrate Muslims into the telling of European history itself.” She seeks to do so by focusing on the approximately one million Muslims in formerly Ottoman regions who became citizens of other empires and states in southeastern Europe from the 1870s to the 1940s, especially in the territory that became Yugoslavia. She offers an outstanding study of the Muslims of this region. But her implied claim that their experience is related to that of Muslims elsewhere in Europe, or that what occurred in Yugoslavia had a role to play in “the making of modern Europe,” is unproven. Instead,

she has used a wealth of Serbo-Croatian archival and literary sources (but no Albanian or Turkish materials, the mother tongues of most Muslims in the region) to write a detailed study about how Muslims, especially intellectuals and Islamic leaders, confronted the political upheaval that affected their lives, and how they sought to carve out an Islamic space for themselves in the new states, especially Yugoslavia.

What were modern states to make of communities that had legal autonomy in premodern empires and whose leaders did not wish to give up that privilege? Greble rightly points out the persistence of Ottoman legal, social, and religious institutions in post-Ottoman Eastern Europe. New states preserved Ottoman-era legal traditions and institutions, including religious autonomy, while using those same institutions in their attempts to build new nations.

These new states’ laws also ensured that Muslims could practice their religion so long as it did not “offend public [Christian] morals,” which was the inverse of the situation in the premodern Ottoman Empire. Muslims were granted both citizenship and the right to limited self-governance, which, as Greble notes, “was an Ottoman system” overseen by religious bureaucrats subsumed to the state. When Austria-Hungary took control over

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the Islamic community's functionaries in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1880, for example, it established a salaried religious hierarchy under secular authority, similar to centuries-old Ottoman practices regarding the Orthodox Church.

Muslims in Eastern Europe were granted sovereignty over their own schools, houses of worship, and other institutions, and were allowed to implement Islamic law (Sharia) in matters of personal law (marriage, inheritance). By the twentieth century, Muslims had become a legal minority in these lands, just as Christians had been a legal minority in the Ottoman Empire, and as Muslims had been a legal minority in medieval Christian Spain and Christians had been a legal minority in medieval Muslim Spain. Thus, contrary to what Greble claims, the status of confessional legal minority had existed in Europe since the eighth century. It was not something introduced in modern Europe.

Religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire were able to maintain their separate religious institutions and be subjects of the ruler in the pre-modern empire, and to protect their religious autonomy while being modern citizens as of the mid-nineteenth century. Thus the central thesis of Greble's book—that it was a novelty for a religious community to play a significant role in carving out a recognized space for itself as a legal minority and as citizens in Europe—is false. If we include the Ottoman dynasty and its empire within European history, as we should, then what Greble is actually narrating is the continuation of both premodern and modern Ottoman as well as other Islamic systems of rule in Europe.

UNDER CHRISTIAN RULE

Greble notes that at the Congress of Berlin of 1878, which followed the Russian–Ottoman War of 1877–78, states that gained former Ottoman territories granted citizenship to all inhabitants, including Muslims. (The Ottomans had already granted such rights within their empire two decades earlier.) Muslims in Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria, as well as Austro-Hungarian-ruled Bosnia-Herzegovina, were the beneficiaries. Greble focuses on wealthy merchants and Islamic scholars and their attempts to make a life for themselves as Muslim citizens of a Christian-ruled

polity. Muslim representatives sat in the first parliaments in these nations.

Greble shows how Muslims were discriminated against in practice despite their rights on paper. More important, the nationalism of each of the new states was inherently Christian, anti-Ottoman, and anti-Muslim, whether expressed in the schools or in prohibitions on interconfessional marriage. From the 1870s to the 1910s, the process of making Muslims into a legal minority hindered their integration into the new nation-states as equal citizens, defined them primarily as Muslims, and increased their dependence on Muslim religious authorities. It should be borne in mind that Christian citizens of the Ottoman Empire had a similar experience.

Greble effectively marshals evidence that during the traumatic decade of the 1910s, Muslims were subject to massacres and expelled from Eastern Europe during the 1912–13 Balkan Wars, and then again during the First World War. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims fled to the remaining territory of the Ottoman Empire. Many called for

their region to be annexed by Austria-Hungary, which had the best relations with its Muslim citizens of any southeastern European power. The decade of war, and the severing of transnational trade networks by the establish-

ment of new borders and nationalizing economic policies, led to the impoverishment of Muslim communities remaining in Eastern Europe, who were left isolated after the collapse of the Habsburg and Ottoman dynasties.

After the First World War, the majority of these formerly Ottoman Muslims found themselves in the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which is Greble's true area of expertise. Muslim religious elites gave support to the new state (except in Kosovo, where the populace turned to rebellion), but they fought for confessional autonomy and retention of their religious properties. These rights were guaranteed by international treaty in 1919, with the League of Nations as the safeguard.

Yet very few of the hundreds of thousands of Muslims who had fled to the Ottoman Empire were allowed to return to Yugoslavia. Yugoslav Muslims—seen as Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian loyalists—faced discrimination and violence in a state that privileged Serbs. Following demands by Muslim leaders, the new state's constitution

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granted Muslims confessional autonomy, compelling them to adjudicate all family and inheritance cases in Sharia courts.

The Yugoslav state established a Bureau for Muslim Affairs within the Ministry of Religion to monitor and control the kingdom's Muslims, aiming to modernize them as part of the nation-building process. It sought to centralize Islamic institutions, including law courts, schools, and mosques, making their judges, teachers, muftis, and imams into state bureaucrats, converting them into propagators of Yugoslav nationalism, and transforming all Muslims into Serbo-Croatian-speaking citizens. Turkey, the ostensible Ottoman successor, took a more radical path by eliminating the Islamic religious class and its institutions. One could argue that Yugoslavia acted like the defunct late Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Some progressive Muslim intellectuals sought to demonstrate that Muslims were already civilized, Westernized, and European. They implored their conservative brothers and sisters to follow suit by abandoning veiling, polygamy, and child marriages, and adopting Slavic languages. According to Greble, Sharia was the only glue linking Yugoslavia's diverse Muslims, but legal scholars differed over how to interpret it. Should they use it as a tool to modernize Muslims and make them active citizens engaged with the state (such as by expanding women's education), or to preserve existing norms in the face of state encroachment and secularization? Progressives and conservatives debated over the veil and men's and women's dress. In all matters affecting Muslims, there was a clash between the aim of a coherent citizenry and rights given to perpetuate minority distinction.

Greble convincingly argues that in the 1920s and 1930s, Muslims in Yugoslavia became cut off from the Muslim-majority regions around them. The Ottoman Empire collapsed, the caliphate was abolished, and a secular nationalist state emerged in Turkey; Muslims faced assimilation in the atheist USSR, and in the Middle East they were ruled by European mandatory powers. Within Yugoslavia, Muslims split among socialists, Islamists, and ethnonationalists (Albanian, Turkish). Over a million Muslims, just over 10 percent of the population, were citizens of Yugoslavia, concentrated in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Macedonia. Many Turkish-speakers migrated to Turkey. Some Muslims feared that what the Ottomans did to the Armenians in 1915, the Serbs would do to them. They would be proved right in the 1990s.

Greble repeatedly shows how Muslims in Yugoslavia were not monolithic, but were divided by class, by region, by being rural or urban, by language, and by adherence either to Yugoslav nationalism and egalitarian citizenship, including confessional protections, or to regional autonomy and minority rights. Some worked closely with the government; others criticized it. Whatever they did, discrimination and violence persisted.

From 1929 to 1934, when he was assassinated, King Aleksander assumed dictatorial powers. Greble tells how he intensified the state's policies to centralize and assimilate its Muslims. He moved the supervision of Muslims from the Ministry of Religion to the Ministry of Justice, relocated the leading Muslim official to Belgrade, disbanded Muslim political organizations, restructured the Sharia courts, imposed new qualifications on Muslim teachers and judges, overhauled the curricula in Muslim schools and established new state schools for Muslims, and centralized the management of religious foundations. His appointed Muslim leader shut down Sufi orders and confiscated their properties.

All of these measures were part of an effort to homogenize the diverse Muslim population into nationalist, Serbo-Croatian-speaking, assimilated Yugoslav Muslims. In 1936, the position of mufti was eliminated. In 1939, Bosnia was divided between Serbia and Croatia. The contradiction remained, as ever, between integrating Muslims into an egalitarian citizenry and granting them legal rights that kept them separate. Using such privileges, their leading official banned Muslims in mixed marriages from membership in the community.

AN AGE OF EXTREMES

Greble relates how throughout the 1930s, an activist, modern, pietist, Islamist revivalist movement gained a mass following. By the beginning of the 1940s this political movement turned against the corrupt Islamic establishment and the project of Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Croatia, joining forces with global pan-Islamic movements. When the Axis occupied and divided Yugoslavia in 1941, many Muslims welcomed the dissolution of the central state and took advantage of it to reclaim lands and reimpose Islam, rolling back the previous secularizing reforms.

Perhaps because Greble's previous book focused on Sarajevo during the war years, she covers the crucial period from 1941 to 1949 far too briefly in this book. Muslims fought for the Nazis

in such puppet states as fascist Ustasha Croatia (which included part of Bosnia). The Ustasha promoted family and religion, Catholicism and Islam, and elevated Muslims to important military and political positions, including vice president. In 1943, Hitler established the Bosnian Muslim Waffen SS unit, the 13th Division Handschar, supported by leading Bosnian religious figures and urged on by the Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Haj Amin al-Husseini. Kosovar Albanians formed an alliance with the Nazis the same year, establishing the Skenderbeg Waffen SS unit. Muslims were perpetrators of violence against Jews, Serbians, and Roma.

Italians and Nazis promised Muslims that they would undo the liberal, secular order imposed after the First World War, playing on their biases against Jews and sentiments against the British and French, who had colonized Muslim-majority lands. Muslims were offered religious freedom and autonomy by both fascists and communists during the war, as a means of recruitment. Some Muslims formed militias that aligned with the partisans, and fought against the Nazis as communists or nationalists.

After the war, Tito's communist partisans established a new socialist regime that sought to eradicate class, religious, and national differences. Greble describes how they aimed to eliminate Muslim institutions, including courts, schools, and religious endowments, because they segregated Muslims from the rest of the population. But immediately after the war, the new regime needed Muslims' cooperation to rebuild society. Although it executed Muslims who had been high-ranking members of the Ustasha regime or had served in the Gestapo and the Waffen SS, and arrested and exiled others, it allowed Islamic institutions to exist in the short term.

Dozens of prominent Muslims threw in their lot with the regime; others resisted the new order. Following the November 1945 elections, which the communists ensured they won, the regime began to secularize and centralize every aspect of life. The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia enshrined atheism in its constitution. Muslim communists spearheaded efforts to dismantle the Islamic judiciary, implement centralized civil legal codes, expropriate religious properties, and close religious schools. Muslims were to be a cultural group, not a separate religious community.

The reader learns that some Muslims responded with protests, sabotage, and armed violence. Underground movements such as the Young

Muslims aimed to resist the imposition of secular norms and to re-Islamize Muslims through secret education. The clash pitted religious Muslims against communist Muslims. In 1946–47, the regime increased its repressive tactics, sentencing to hard labor or executing those it considered counterrevolutionaries. Muslim leaders were arrested and imprisoned after show trials. The party was purged of many Muslims. Islamic scholars approved by the state imposed laws compelling women to unveil.

By 1950, the state controlled Muslim life and had suppressed the Young Muslim movement. Muslims ceased to be a legal minority. Yugoslavia successfully concluded its literacy and unveiling campaigns and legislated compulsory schooling. It controlled madrasas, replaced religious scholars with state-trained progressives, and eliminated the conservative landowning class, replacing it with a Muslim working class in the new industrialized economy. Turkish-speakers were encouraged to leave in the 1950s, and Albanian-speakers were repressed. By the 1971 census, Slavic-speaking Muslims had become a national rather than a religious category, which was similar to the experience of Jews in the Soviet Union.

Greble ends her narrative before reaching the breakup of Yugoslavia, the civil war of the 1990s, and the genocide of Bosnian Muslims. But her analysis of the period from the 1870s to the 1940s provides the background to understand what happened afterward.

Her book would have been more properly titled *Being Muslim in Modern Yugoslavia*. Although successful as a book-length discussion of the legal status of Muslims in Yugoslavia, with its Ottoman imprint, the study does not address the status of Muslims in the rest of contemporary Europe. No comparative analysis is made of the growing Muslim communities of England, Germany, or France in the same period, nor is there comparison with the struggles of Muslim minorities in neighboring Greece, or Bulgaria. Greble has bypassed the large literature on these Muslims. Recent studies (such as my own *German, Jew, Muslim, Gay: The Life and Times of Hugo Marcus*) have explored the first generation of Muslims in interwar Central Europe and their convert leaders who synthesized German and Islamic culture. Greble does not engage with such studies. Nonetheless, as it is, *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe* is an impressive study of how one community and its leaders rode the winds of change as long as they could. ■