

Is Europe in danger of becoming 'Islamised'?

Spaniard Alejandro Macarron argues that "the immigrants flooding into Europe mask the pain of its huge baby deficit, disguising the ugly demographic numbers which gives the public and politicians an out to in taking real steps necessary to avoid committing demographic suicide."

Immigrants Flood Into Europe

Will they cure Europe's demographic sickness or just temporarily alleviate the pain?

Alejandro Macarron

IT DOESN'T MATTER if we Spaniards do not have enough children, as long as foreign migrants come to Spain and have kids here," the head of a major conservative Spanish think tank said to me a couple of years ago. I had suggested to him that the center-right Partido Popular—now the governing party in Spain—promote pro-natal policies.

But can immigration really make up for Spain's growing birth deficit? Since 2011, when we had our conversation, both Spaniards and migrants have had fewer children each year. In part because of the ongoing economic recession, there were 10% fewer children born in 2013 than in 2011. Moreover, more people migrated out of Spain than migrated into it during this period. The net migration flow was negative, not positive.

Tylenol is great for relieving the pain of a headache, but it won't cure a brain tumor. In fact, by masking the pain, it might stop us from finding out that we have a tumor and seeking treatment for it. It might, in this way, actually kill us.

Many Europeans view immigration the way that people with a headache view Tylenol. The immigrants flooding into Europe mask the pain of the aging native population with its huge baby deficit. It disguises the ugly core demographic numbers, and gives politicians and the public an excuse to avoid taking the real steps necessary to avoid committing demographic suicide.

Europe and Japan are the frontrunners in this race to oblivion. Both have populations that are dramatically shrinking and aging. Low birth rates and increased life expectancy are both responsible, but what the demographers call "lowest low fertility" accounts for the bulk of the problem.

In the official published statistics, foreign immigrants and their locally born

children partially cover up a very inconvenient truth: native European populations are ageing at historically unprecedented speeds. They are shrinking, or on the verge of shrinking, because two generations of Europeans have failed to have enough children to replace themselves. Foreign migrants partially mask this pain, making European (and US) demographic statistics look better than they otherwise would. Immigrants provide:

More people: this is especially valuable in countries whose native population is already decreasing. For instance, the population of Spain was about to start shrinking 15 years ago, but 6 million foreign immigrants, who had over 1 million children, forestalled this. As a result, the country's population grew by 15%, instead of shrinking.

A significant number of additional births: Immigrants have high birth rates, accounting for from 15% to 40% of all children born in European countries. For instance, the mothers of over 35% of all the babies born in Switzerland were born abroad. This number is 30% in Belgium and Austria, 25% in the UK, Sweden, and Norway, 22% in Spain, and 20% in France. In Spain, there are provinces where 35% - 40% of babies come from foreign-born parents, often Morocco.

"Natural population change" improved: The difference between births and deaths—the so-called "natural population change"—is generally increased by migrants. They add a significant number of births, but die proportionally less than natives. This is because they arrive in their new country when they are 20 to 50 years old, and their mortality rates are much lower than those of 65 years and over. This contribution is especially valuable in countries like Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria or Switzerland, whose na-

tive populations are already shrinking. Moreover, in nations like Switzerland, Spain or Denmark, populations are still growing because of lots of immigrant babies and relatively immigrant deaths.

Average age of population decreased: Immigrants are younger than natives, especially in countries with aging populations like Germany, Italy or Spain. For instance, the average age of people in Spain is 42 years, but the average increases to 43 years if we only consider the native inhabitants, and climbs to 44 if we just count Spanish natives and their children.

Fertility rates significantly increased: Immigrants can add between 0.05 to 0.15 to the total fertility rate (TFR)—the number of children per woman—of a country or region. For instance, in the Spanish province of Catalonia, the TFR was 1.24 children per woman in 2013, but increases to 1.34 if immigrants is included. Newly arrived and Muslim immigrants tend to have much higher fertility. Immigrants from Eastern Europe and Latin America tend to have lower fertility. Based on the numbers released by INE (Spain's national statistics bureau), Colombian women living in Spain had a 2013 TFR of just 1.0 children, while Spanish women had a TFR of 1.2. On the other hand, Moroccan women living in Spain had a TFR of 3.2 children[5]. They are only 2% of all women of reproductive age in Spain, but they delivered 5% of all babies born in the country.

Overall, foreign immigrants have a very positive demographic impact in Western Europe, as long as these immigrants are properly integrated into their host societies. Needless to say, this is not always easy to do, either economically, politically, or culturally, and it is certainly not cost-free[6].

Immigration can certainly be part of the solution to Europe's low birth rates, but it cannot be entire solution. If such immigrants create a false sense of well-being, distracting the native population from the demographic cliff that it is about to go over, it may doom them to destruction.

Because the simple fact is, if Europeans do not start having children, they will commit demographic suicide. It is just a matter of time.

NB. Numbers in this article are mostly data from European official statistical

are my best estimate (for instance, the UK numbers for children from a mother born abroad are only available for England and Wales).

(2) "Foreign mother" is a foreign national living in a European country.

(3) "Mother born abroad" is a woman born abroad who is currently living in a European country, who may or may not be naturalized.

(4) "Births minus deaths native population" is calculated by deducting, from the country total births minus deaths, the contribution to both from people not

around 20% for Spanish people, three major foreign communities had, respectively, unemployment rates of 5%, 30% and 50%, according to the information provided to the author of this article by the local Migration Authority. In a generous social-democratic welfare State like Spain, that 50% unemployed community was essentially a net swallower of taxpayer money. On the other hand, it can be argued that Western Europe benefit with immigration is depleting Eastern Europe (where deaths exceed births by far since the end of the 20th century), from a sig-

	% births from foreign mother	% births from mother born abroad	Births minus deaths - Total	Births minus deaths - Only country nationals	Births minus deaths - Only native population
Austria	24.6%	29.5%	-484	-16,844	-13,886
Belgium	21.1%	31.0%	24,948	4,610	-4,833
Denmark	12.4%	16.9%	5,591	-534	-2,158
France	14.7%	20.1%	223,213	133,855	65,740
Germany	17.0%	N/A	-196,038	-288,978	N/A
Italy	18.4%	N/A	-78,687	-175,226	N/A
Netherlands	10.4%	19.2%	35,146	18,968	12,079
Norway	18.2%	24.7%	18,263	8,087	5,095
Portugal	10.3%	18.5%	-17,771	-25,233	-20,170
Spain	19.0%	22.7%	51,151	-25,108	-36,920
Sweden	14.3%	25.1%	21,239	7,653	2,224
Switzerland	37.7%	N/A	17,991	-7,440	N/A
United Kingdom	N/A	26.5% (England and Wales only)	201,245	N/A	50,074

Source of primary data: Eurostat, UK Office for national statistics, INSEE (France)

Numbers of year 2012, except for Belgium (2010), France (2013), Italy (2011), UK (2013)

bureaus (like European Union Eurostat, French INSEE, Spanish INE, German Destatis or Swiss Statistical Office), or figures calculated by the author, using such primary data.

The Demographic impact of foreign immigrants on the countries of Western Europe

(1) These numbers are an exact addition / subtraction / percentage from original data of the official statistics source, except in a few cases where they

born in a particular European country.

(5) We estimate that new female immigrants from Morocco had a TFR of 4.2 children in 2009, but that their TFR falls very quickly after their arrival as they accommodate to the prevalent patterns in the host country.

(6) When this is not the case, the balance for the host country of foreign migration is less clear. For instance, at the beginning of 2013, in a major region of Spain, with unemployment rate of

nificant part of its working age and young population. For instance, circa 10% of Romanian population fled to either Italy (6%) or Spain (4%). And they were 3-4 years younger in average than the rest of Romanians.

Alejandro Maccarrón is an engineer and business consultant. He is the founder and managing director of the Demo-

graphic Renaissance Foundation (www.renacimiento-demografico.org), a think tank based in Madrid, Spain and the author of "El suicidio demográfico de España" (The Demographic Suicide of Spain).

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Islam has no fear of an atheistic, emasculated West!



In Order To Meet Islam, We Must First Go Back To Christ

By Fr. Piero Gheddo, Dean of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions in the Vatican; Reprinted from *The Wanderer* (12 March 2015), a National Catholic Weekly founded by German immigrants in 1867.

(Editor's Note: Fr. Gheddo is an Italian missionary, author, and a journalist. In the following essay, provided by AsiaNews, he gives his perspective on why we must go back to the roots of the West, to the Gospel of Jesus, to face Islam without arriving at a total clash with the provocation of Muhammad's followers.)

(Fr. Gheddo comments that "to meet and engage in dialogue with Islam, we must return to God and the Ten Commandments, Jesus Christ and His Gospel, not only in our personal lives, but also in that of the family, society, education, mass media, etc.")

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MILAN (AsiaNews) — In the past few months, Islamic terrorism has become front-page news as a serious danger for Europe and Italy. Many are wondering what to do. Others focus on laws to cope with the serious situation. Yet, calls for greater vigilance and firmness have led nowhere. Our rich and secularized democratic world is ill prepared to deal with it. Western and Islamic peoples do not understand each other. There is a gulf between our desire to live in peace and terrorists' violence.

Following the Twin Towers on 9/11 (2001) in New York, recent history showed that the

wars against Islamic extremism (in Afghanistan and Iraq, and today against the Caliphate) not only have not solved the problem of terrorism, but have worsened the situation. "Holy war" and "martyrdom for Islam" have become popular in many countries. We cannot wage war to defeat 1.4 billion people who live with conviction their religion and religious culture. So, what are we to do?

Speaking in January before the Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (PISAI), Pope Francis stressed the significance of dialogue with Muslims.

In fact, "Perhaps there has never been a greater need" for this, he said, among other things, "since the most effective antidote to violence is teaching the discovery and acceptance of difference as richness and fruitfulness." This requires an attitude of "listening" that helps understand the values of others, as well as an "adequate education so that, secure in one's identity, we can grow in mutual understanding." However, this also means "not falling into the trap of a conciliatory and ultimately empty syncretism that is the harbinger of a totalitarianism without values."

The clash of two civilizations that do not understand each other does not have as its fundamental motivation politics or economics, but religion. This is why.

First, in the West, the ideal is the "freedom" of man, even from the laws of God who created the world and humanity. We live in a virtually atheistic society and Islamic peo-

ples see the Christian West as an enemy, a danger to their faith! They are drawn to the modern world, but they also fear it! Our life offends them. They do not want to live in an increasingly inhumane world like ours, rich but arid and empty inside, about which we complain too.

This is the refrain heard in mosques and in the Muslim press. Believers in the Koran have the mission to bring God to the atheist and emasculated West. Such ideas, which are inculcated from an early age in schools, are part of their faith and their culture. It is true that only a minority practices Islamic terrorism, but millions of

Muslims share that ideology.

Speaking to the European Parliament after the Twin Towers, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, "The West must defend our values... We have created a soulless civilization. Where can we find this soul unless we return to the Gospel which made the West great?"

In the current situation, which makes our society increasingly devoid of ideals, pessimistic and selfish, in crisis because we lack children (how many millions of abortions in the last 30 years?), we see Islam provoking us by every means, from population growth to terrorism, but also with "holy war" and "martyrdom for Islam," to lead us back to the stated purpose of faith in God, even if it is the God of the Koran, and not the God of the Gospel!

Typically, we in the West live as if God did not exist. However, to meet and engage in dialogue with Islam, we must return to God and the Ten Commandments, Jesus Christ and His Gospel, not only in our personal lives, but also in that of the family, society, education, mass media, etc.

We must, in other words, rediscover our Christian identity. The alternative is war against Muslim peoples, which we would certainly lose in the long term for the simple reason that Muslims are young people, whereas we in the West are old people!

We have to have a more realistic view of Muslims and understand the huge respon-

sibility we Western Christians have (now and in the past) in the rise and expansion of Islamic "terrorism."

In a 1990 speech ("We and Islam"), Carlo Cardinal Martini said, "What should we Christians think about Islam? What meaning can the rise of this religion have in God's plan, one that is close to Christianity and yet so combative, so capable of conquest, of making many converts in a weak Europe? In a Western world that is losing its sense of absolute values and is no longer able of attaching them to an overarching God, the witness of the primacy of God on all things, and of His need for justice, makes us understand the historic values that Islam has brought with itself and that it can still bear witness to [in] our society."

A Christian Heresy

The second point is that Islam does not define itself in terms of "human freedom" but in terms of "submission to God."

Let me repeat: The God of the Koran is not that of the Gospel! It lives and proclaims the presence of God (Allah) in the life of every man, family, and society. Faith is the greatest gift that God has given to man, which we have to preserve through prayer and respect for the Commandments. Faith is not just a personal choice (as exasperated secularism and secularization proclaim and impose); it is a sense of belonging to a community of believers and to all of humanity created by the same God.

Islam is a religion that comes, at least in part, from the same roots as Christianity, the God of Abraham, so that in its early days some Church Fathers called it "a Christian heresy."

However, today it is certainly not a humanizing religion. Islamic realities (violations of human and women's rights) offer a negative image. That is another matter even if states and each of us have a duty to defend ourselves and our people against external aggressions and invasions.

Let me repeat what I heard from many Christian bishops living in Islamic countries: Even today, in God's plan, Islam has a role in human history, one that we do not know, but one that deserves respect and attention.

For us Christians today, the challenge is meeting, not clashing with Muslim peoples; dialogue, not war; return to faith and life in Christ, not theoretical and practical atheism.