

Why the EU is not like the US: The BREXIT Surprise
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European nationalism did not die when the EU was born. Climbing out of the ashes of Europe's second massively destructive war in the 20th century, a group of educated idealists formed the first attempt at economic integration of the European Coal and Steel Community in the 1950s. This grew to integrating more European nations into an Economic Community from 1958-1992. The EC added more European countries to this community, which then became the European Union, an actual attempt to create a "United States of Europe."

After a referendum, the world was shocked to learn that one of the most important members of this union, United Kingdom (Britain) had voted to leave the EU. This is what you get with "direct democracy," referendums with the most zealous voters deciding complex issues with simplistic slogans. Our own direct democracy yielded an equal disaster with the Republican primary election of Donald Trump as nominee. Direct Democracy does not represent the measured opinions of "high information" voters, who don't like bread and circuses.

Unifying Europe was a great dream that, given enough time, might have worked. However, the unaddressed issue in the EU structure is the great class divide: not an economic divide, since European states have all adopted generous welfare to eradicate poverty. The divide is educational and cultural, a divide that might have been remedied over time, except for one painful issue: the Muslim "invasion" of Europe.

European elites correctly note that Europe's birthrate has plummeted since the end of World War II and immigration is the way to save these countries. However, the free flow of labor throughout the EU, once a movement from the poorer European countries to the rich ones, never created the resentment and cultural dysfunction as has the flood of Muslims, the majority of whom bring an entirely different history and culture with them.

The elites, living in leafy suburbs or posh London or Paris flats, have not had neighbors such as Muslims in Northern England who object to the teaching of the "Three Little Pigs" in nursery school, the "Pig & Whistle" food chain, and demand for welfare for polygamist families. Ordinary people want to know why these immigrants should have such say in trashing British culture, but the elites have made it unacceptable to protest; they mandate "multiculturalism," loved by those who fly to Paris for the weekend.

Crime, rape, and now terrorism all over the EU have accompanied the hordes of uneducated Muslim economic refugees, but the elites have forbidden identification of criminals as Muslim in the popular press. Ordinary Europeans are not fooled; they know the cost of their generous immigration policy. But they are called "racists" or "bigots" when they complain.

Democracy, when it works well, requires a common culture among the citizens. The elites and the ordinary people must agree on the values that underlie their civilization. Democracies fail when there is a vast cultural divide---too many poor and too few rich; too many ignorant (and proud of it) and too few educated who can put a dent in the ignorance.

America experienced this culture clash in the 1820s, when voting rights expanded from educated property owners to all white men, literate or not. President Andrew Jackson was the result of that election, followed by 40 years of bad governance, until a civil war finally addressed slavery and gave us President Lincoln. Populism never provides good governance. Knowing nothing is not a virtue.

Europe is going through this crisis today. Efforts to unite, so idealistically promoted by the wise and educated, are now in retreat because the elites scorned the "provinciality" of the masses. Provinciality does not necessarily mean stupid. The EU's haste to create a common culture did not consider how ordinary Europeans who identified with their particular cultures would feel when some very turbulent migrants were given benefits and protections they did not earn. No, this is not a new "peasants' revolt," as some wags have said; but it is the revolt of those who did not see themselves yet as citizens of Europe. The United States of Europe has been premature.

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