



# Immigration as Survival Strategy

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During the 25-year period from 1991 to 2015, an estimated 23.7 million people immigrated to Germany while 18.7 emigrated, immigrants therefore outnumbering emigrants by some five million. The fact that Germany's population only experienced a modest increase from 81 to around 82 million during the same period is mainly due to deaths exceeding births by a good three million, which means that the immigrants made up for the falling birth rate to a considerable extent.

Immigration levels were particularly high in 2015. Last year, close to two million people immigrated while just under 0.9 million emigrated, producing positive net migration of

1.1 million. However, these 1.1 million people will not necessarily still all be here in two or three years' time. A fair number will – as has happened in the past – return to their countries of origin either voluntarily or involuntarily in the foreseeable future, while others will move to third countries; yet others, who wish and are allowed to remain, will arrange for their families to join them. Of the 1.1 million who came in 2015, just 0.4 to 0.5 million are likely to still be here two or three years from now.

Of course we have not seen the last of it. People are still coming to Germany and the EU in large numbers this year – and net migration is likely to remain clearly positive over the next few

years as well, with immigrants outnumbering emigrants by something like 0.4 million a year on average. In this case, net immigration would amount to around 1.2 million within three years, roughly compensating for the birth deficit of the indigenous population.

These figures illustrate that being a country with nine neighbours, Germany is and always has been a natural immigration, emigration and transit country to a greater extent than any other country in Europe, where people arrive, leave and remain. In addition to this there are not many other regions in the world that are as advantaged as Europe in terms of their climate, soil, topography and many other features.

Where there has been a change over time, however, is in the migrants' predominant countries of origin. Today, hardly any originate from Italy, Spain or Portugal or even Turkey; instead they come from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Western Balkans and increasingly the Maghreb countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Close to two-thirds of those arriving in Germany in 2015 originated from those areas. Unlike the indigenous population, these immigrants are young, four-fifths of them being under 35 and a third of those under 16; and 70 per cent are male, although the ratio has shifted slightly of late as there are now also many women coming to Germany. And culturally, they are considerably more different from us than the immigrants of the previous century. Specifically, not only do they speak other languages, they also have distinctly different traditions and customs, and what is probably more significant: the great majority of them also have different religious beliefs and a different understanding of the law.

Ignoring all this would constitute an ineffectual attempt to block out reality. Instead one should acknowledge that current immigration is a new, unfamiliar type of immigration of which no one – neither immigrant nor host – has or can have genuine experience. The fact that this represents a challenge that is very demanding for all those involved is reflected in the response

by our European partners, almost all of which have already capitulated. This does not only apply to the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians but also to the Danes, Dutch, French, British and even the Swiss and Swedes. How can, how should things progress given this situation?

In the endeavour to answer this question, a gulf has opened between those aiming at short-term solutions, arguing tactically, and those aiming at the long-term solutions, arguing strategically. The former call attention to the high costs this immigration entails, substantiating this by the fact that Germany will incur extra expenditure of 25 to 35 billion euros a year. They claim that this immigration will put an additional burden on our social insurance systems and social infrastructures, such as housing, the transport systems, schools and hospitals, and possibly even overextend them. They are concerned about the increasing risk of social tension, particularly in the labour market. And finally, they fear increasing cultural heterogeneity that goes far beyond multiculturalism. Put another way: they fear for the continued existence of the governmental and political order including the rule of law. Succinctly stated, they are worried that the indigenous population will be overburdened in the long term, a worry that is, not least, shared by many immigrants from earlier decades.

On the other side of the fence are people with a long-term outlook, who put forward three main arguments:

1. Without immigration, Germany will be marginalised, i.e. sink into insignificance, within a few generations. These are the facts: the world population is growing at a rate equating to the addition of the German population every year, namely over 80 million, and the trend is upwards. Since the 1930s, the global population has almost tripled from 2.5 to 7.4 billion. According to United Nations projections, the figure is set to increase further to 8.4 billion by 2030 and to 9.6 billion by 2050. This corresponds to an increase in global population of 2.3 billion

within three decades, almost the same number of people as populated the earth in 1930.

But Europeans, including the Germans, will no longer contribute to this development. This is due to the fact that in Germany and other European countries the birth rate has not been sufficiently high to replenish the population. The last cohort in this country that had as many children as their own parents was born as long ago as 1882. Ever since, each generation of children has been smaller in number than their parents' generation, roughly a third smaller since the 1970s.

The consequence of this divergence in population development between Germany and Europe on the one hand and the rest of the world on the other: in 1900, 25 per cent of the world population were European and three per cent were German. Today, only ten per cent are European and just over one per cent German.

And towards the end of this century, the European share in the world population is estimated to drop to six per cent – assuming the immigration rates remain the same! – and the Germans will figure in the thousandths. Maybe this is to be welcomed in such a densely populated world. But one also needs to realise that without immigration, the importance of Germans and Europeans in the fabric of the world population would decrease rapidly.

2. For the first time in human history not only individuals but humanity as a whole is ageing. Germans and Europeans, however, are particularly far advanced on this path. Together with the Japanese, they represent the oldest populations in the world. Besides the low birth rate, this is also due to a steep rise in life expectancy since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

Up to that point, human life expectancy had risen little, both in Europe and the rest of

the world. In 1800, people in Germany lived hardly any longer than people in antiquity. The median age – half the population being younger, the other half older – was 18 back then and few people lived past 60. But life expectancy rose subsequently, albeit very slowly to start with. By 1900, the median age in Germany was 23 and there was what could be called a grandparent generation for the first time.

That said, average life expectancy of a woman born around 1900 was still just 43. Females born today, by contrast, can expect to reach twice that age, namely 86.

While this development cannot and will not continue indefinitely, it will probably persist for several decades, with the population ageing more and more. A large-scale influx of predominantly young people – including many children – could at least slow down the ageing of the population in countries such as Germany. And it could produce a noticeable boost particularly to the labour market. That is one area where the demographic upheavals are already causing serious problems today, to wit the shortage of apprentices and skilled labour. In that situation, hundreds of thousands of young people looking for employment could be just what is needed.

However, a frequent question is whether these young people do not need to be given training at great cost and effort first. And that is a legitimate query. Not only the apprenticeship and trainee structures but school structures as well need to be adapted and in part set up in the first place, which will require considerable funding. But why not look at it this way: what can a people expect when it has only replenished two-thirds of its population for close to fifty years, thereby underinvesting by the trillions? If it wants to continue to survive and run an economy, it will need to make up for the investments it failed to make. The time for that is now!



Newcomer: "Current immigration is a new, unfamiliar type of immigration of which no one – neither immigrant nor host – has or can have genuine experience." [Source: © Pascal Rossignol, Reuters.](#)

3. The 21<sup>st</sup> century will become a century of mass migration – leaving the issue of asylum seekers and other refugees aside – and the winners will be those who start early on to make the necessary preparations and are capable of utilising immigration to their advantage. What are the reasons for this assessment of the situation?

The first thing to mention is the continuing increase in population numbers in Africa, for instance. In 1970, 520 million people lived on this continent. Today, it is 1.3 billion, i.e. far more than twice that number. Towards the end of this century, it is likely to be 4.3 billion. That corresponds to an eightfold increase of the population within 130 years. There has never been a comparable development throughout human history. And Africa is not alone. A similar trend can be observed in the Middle East, in Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

What does that mean for the world's regions favoured by nature, particularly if the population numbers there are in decline as is currently the case in Germany and Europe? This is meant rhetorically, as the answer is obvious. Germany and Europe will be subject to high immigration pressure for the foreseeable future, which will be impossible to withstand through barbed wire or military means in the long term. There can and will be no fortress of Europe; for one, because many Europeans do not want this, and secondly, because it is unrealistic.

Consequently, the fates of different peoples are becoming intermingled and interwoven with unprecedented intensity. We in Europe are in the process of learning this the hard way. The world as a whole has yet to learn this lesson. However, we know this much already: insisting too much on a Polish, Hungarian or Czech identity is becoming increasingly anachronistic.



Future homebuilders: "Immigration will highlight our demographic vulnerability and show us how much we have aged and become inflexible to some extent. It will make this society realise – be it willingly or unwillingly – to what degree it is existentially dependent on others and needs to rely on them."

Source: © Hannibal Hanschke, Reuters.

And the same applies to countries such as France, the UK and of course also Germany, albeit maybe with a certain time lag.

It is not surprising that we – the peoples of the countries that underwent industrialisation early on – are finding all this particularly difficult to deal with. After all, we are the ones who have been and still are benefiting most from the status quo. We have used and still are using

the natural resources of the world largely without considering the needs of others and benefit from cheap raw materials and food. Taking advantage of cheap semi-finished products, mostly imported from less developed economies, has allowed us to reduce the costs of our own industrial production considerably. And the efforts of extremely low-paid workers, who earn only a fraction of the German minimum wage, have helped to raise our material prosperity to



It will make this society realise – be it willingly or unwillingly – to what degree it is existentially dependent on others and needs to rely on them. And ultimately, all these lessons will be to its benefit, albeit painful to experience. And the earlier we learn these lessons, the better. It may well turn out to be Germany’s good fortune that it has not closed itself totally to these lessons, contrary to some of its neighbours. Time will tell what benefits it will reap from them.

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historically unprecedented heights. Given that situation, it does not come easy to make do with less and share one’s wealth with the poor of this earth.

However, the longer we prevaricate, the harder we are likely to be hit by the harsh realities. Immigration will highlight our demographic vulnerability and show us how much we have aged and become inflexible to some extent.