

Fortress Europe

Are immigration and Islam killing Europe? Not if Germans can help it.

By Andy Ross

The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam

By Douglas Murray. Updated edition, 371 pages, Bloomsbury 2018

The Shortest History of Germany

By James Hawes. 249 pages, Old Street Publishing 2018

The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution, and the Twentieth Century

By Peter Watson. 983 pages, Simon and Schuster 2010

A Timebomb

Europe has a problem with immigrants and Islam that we need to discuss. This is the big statement of Douglas Murray's book *The Strange Death of Europe*. He may be right, but he has no solution and his argument needs recasting from start to finish.

If we widen the context of the argument to include the historic role of science and German culture in Europe and the world, we can see more clearly what sort of problem Muslim immigration really poses. I think Europeans are up to the challenge.

But the clock is ticking, the tide is rising, and a happy ending still seems far away.

Five Centuries

Enlightened Europe was the cradle of modern civilization and is still a leading source of new breakthroughs in the search for a globally viable way forward.

Earlier, human civilization reached peaks in the Mideast region from Egypt to Mesopotamia, in the Indus Valley in northwest India, and in China. The Chinese sage Confucius, the Indian called the Buddha, the Persian sage Zoroaster, the Greek philosopher Socrates, and the Jewish martyr Jesus together led humanity into the age of personality.

Europe was late to the party. During a thousand years when a morbid Christianity was the brightest light in Europe, the Persian region was hosting an Islamic Golden Age. The warring peoples of the European continent took centuries to get their act together.

Finally, they did. The age of personality has reached a new zenith in Europe within the last five hundred years. Our modern ideas emerged in a Christian culture backlit by classical philosophers. Slowly, a climate of critical and independent thinking arose.

Now we live in the age of science. Humanism and the cult of personality have brought us a growing crowd of historic figures who populate a master narrative in which the guiding thread is the gradual development of the worldview of science and technology behind our globalized culture. The secular gods in our new world include the heroic personalities behind the rise to dominance of science.

Many of the figures in the new pantheon are dead white European males from recent centuries, as Peter Watson makes clear in his magisterial survey *The German Genius*. The array of busts in the temple of Valhalla on the bank of the Danube near Regensburg may illustrate the narrative. The busts depict heroes in the tale of how Europe outgrew the classical world in terms of civilizational achievement.

The last humans in the years to come will look back on our years as the Golden Age of the species, when organic minds were in control and the machines were still our trusty tools. Scientists have built a conception of the cosmos and our place in it that bids fair to serve the human race for the rest of its term on Earth, until we merge with our machines and the last purebred humans live on like horses do for us today.

Among the Europeans, those from the region around the Rhine valley played central roles. That region extended to England, to France, to northern Italy, and to other lands hosting nations that came and went as history rolled on. The larger story was one of political integration as armies rampaged back and forth across the continent.

Martin Luther was the prophet who sensed the big wave coming. Bold thinkers such as Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, Leibniz, Newton, Kant, Gauss, and many more began to seed the landscape of mind that centuries of Christian slumber had prepared. Darwin, Maxwell, Hertz, Mendeleev, Planck, Hilbert, Einstein, and countless others defined the outlines of science as we know it. The track was laid for a runaway train of technology that took mankind to the Moon.

Along the way, European imperialists reached out and transformed the surface of the Earth. Many European nations established empires overseas, all now gone, which left a legacy of European ways across the world that triggered the overthrow of older empires, such as the Muslim empires of Turkey, Persia, and India. The changes ran both ways, as cultures elsewhere civilized the ways of the Western barbarians, who had imposed their will with guns and violence.

Today we have a global civilization. European dominance is fading into history as other peoples and nations jump onto the train of progress and carry the story further. The European political response to reaching and passing peak power and glory was first to stage a continental war of shattering intensity, in two parts, then to feed a further latent war that threatened human life around the globe, and finally to accept peaceful decline into a stable union within a globalized polity.

Four Freedoms

The European Union is a secular political union built in stages over fifty years with the declared aim of preventing a major war from ever again breaking out on European soil. The wars of the Reich were enough, too much already, for a continent that had seen more than its share of strife for two thousand years. A third big war would go nuclear, and that was reason enough to make big sacrifices for the Kantian goal of perpetual peace. The main such sacrifice was to limit the sovereignty that nation states had traditionally enjoyed.

In practical terms, the EU unfolded as an economic arrangement for the shared prosperity of the peoples of Europe, and for that goal the sacrifices were both less onerous and more straightforward to negotiate. Systems of shared rules and standard regulations are easy to accept when the benefits of greater prosperity through smoother trade are obvious for all to see. The principle behind this economic convergence is encapsulated as the simple ideal of upholding the four freedoms: free movement of people, of capital, of goods, and of services. Freedom, that most desirable of political ideals, was thus translated into something with cash value, namely the practical goal of shared prosperity.

Economic progress spelled out this way obviously required free movement of people, of workers and their families, within the union, just as economic dynamism within a nation requires the free movement of workers to keep up with changes in the job market. The nationality of a person within the union became a property as irrelevant for many purposes as age, sex, skin color, religion, and so on. Only differences of professional qualification or work experience were counted as important in the single market, and hence in the provision of housing and of health and education services to family members.

For anyone aware of the historical baggage that people drag behind them, whether they like it or not, an ideal as ambitious as that of free movement for people was obviously a hostage to fortune. As soon as the economic engines within the EU were humming along nicely, pressure mounted for the import of more people from overseas to fill the new jobs and to sustain the accelerating increase in prosperity the increasingly interdependent engines were generating. Europe became one of the great workshops of the world, filling global markets with quality goods, raising living standards worldwide, and exporting awareness of the benefits of European civilization to the ends of the Earth. As long as things went well, the import of millions of people to help do the work was not a problem.

A key factor behind the continued popularity of the EU was the obvious success story of the United States of America. The new nation of America won its independence from imperial Britain in the same transatlantic flush of revolutionary enthusiasm as that behind the rise of Napoleon in France. America soon began to import people from all over Europe by the millions. These immigrants worked well together in the great melting pot and forged a nation that rose to global dominance through its decisive contribution to the two big wars in Europe. When Americans landed astronauts on the Moon and forced the collapse of the Soviet Union, the manifest success of the melting pot experiment for people from all over Europe, as well as for others from humble origins worldwide, made the ideal of European integration, even as far as a United States of Europe, seem like a no-brainer.

Europeans had a shining American model to emulate as they built their union. Nationalism was out of fashion and everyone agreed that deepening cooperation was the way to go. What could possibly go wrong?

Mass immigration revealed a problem the governments of Europe had not anticipated. For centuries, European civilization could profit from the Christian socialization of the peasants and workers who supported its rise to greatness. The primordial savagery of man was softened in the ethic of peace and love that Christian priests imposed, if not at the level where nation waged war on nation then at least at the more mundane level of everyday intercourse in town squares and in the human rituals surrounding birth, marriage, and death. But many of the new immigrants were Muslims.

America was different. Founded and sustained during its first century with the help of slaves from Africa, America betrayed its claim to live the high ideals of its Christian moral heritage but at least gave rise to no Muslim problem. Progress against racism was slow, and another century later the seamless integration of the descendants of its slaves was still unfinished business, but the former slaves did not rebel in ways that threatened the constitutional order. Instead they agitated for reforms that only confirmed and strengthened the moral pillars of America.

At first, the importation of guest workers into Germany following the end of the Reich was seen as pragmatic economic policy. Many other European countries such as France and Britain imported workers too, often as immigrants from their former imperial domains, and sought to integrate them as citizens who were formally on a par with ancestrally native citizens. This had precedents not only in America but also in older empires reaching back to Ancient Rome. No one imagined that new problems would arise, even when millions of new citizens entered each of the major states of Europe.

But problems did arise. Abstract recognition of the rights of man and the principles of justice could not force people to deny the cruder feelings that welled up when cold abstractions seemed to clash with practical concerns. Nativism, racism, and xenophobia were soon high on the political agenda.

Nativists insisted on preferential treatment of ancestral natives within their nation. Granting the newcomers equal rights to hard-won privileges seemed unfair to natives lower on the economic ladder. Treating guest fairly was one thing but letting them get their hands on the family silver was something else. The foundations of the welfare state, where all citizens had extensive claims on any welfare benefits they needed to stay in the social game, were tested as never before when newcomers from poorer and less developed states saw the new benefits culture as a guarantee of lifelong luxury, work or no work.

Racists let their pride in the innate strengths of their native stock spill over into biological reductionism. They and their conspecifics felt themselves biologically better, fitter by virtue of their genes perhaps, and hence worthy of privileged treatment in the game of social life. A bogus science of racial differences had exercised its baleful influence on social policies in the Third Reich and proved its moral bankruptcy in action, but more modern racists kept on

finding ways to finesse those horrors and claim such doctrines anew. None of it really worked out in the hard currency of modern science, and cooler heads now say the old ideas have nothing to offer but confusion and dismay.

Xenophobes took another tack and bemoaned the changes they saw unfolding around them, lamenting the loss of times gone by, when cultural cohesion seemed more assured and they could trust the people and institutions they had to live with. The new neighbors in their streets were incomprehensibly different, with weird ways and nasty habits, and the xenophobes felt lost among them, lacking even the sure support of a shared moral code anchored in a universal religion.

A secular solution to these problems is hard to build. Science and technology make cold and unforgiving beds for a species born in religious myths and suckled on heroic legends, even for one raised to a kind of transcendence by the God of Abraham. But a modern secular state with an industrial economy can offer little else. As liberal humanists, we cannot willfully resurrect old myths that look like arrant nonsense.

The historic saga of the rise of science offers no great comfort to people outside the Western tradition. Such people have their own myths, which in many cases continue to seem more congenial to them, and the result is a multicultural world where even the simplest bedrock truths are hard to agree upon. This is the problem exposed by recent immigrants who brought with them the hard and simple faith of Islam.

The crux of the matter is religion. More exactly, Islam is the problem. It seems a hostile faith.

Hostility is nothing new for Europeans. The European Union was formed precisely to overcome the old hostilities between the European nations. But historical reckonings with Islam, in the Crusades and against the Moors and the Turks, had always ended with Islam as an external threat, kept at bay by force of arms.

Here we need to understand the last few wars in Europe.

Three Wars

Europe was the launchpad for a movement that lasted five centuries. A Christian social order had incubated the dream among the races of Europe to rise up and leave the swaddling rags of their infant status as babes in Christ behind. Their childhood myth was burned with the rags in the wars of liberation fought by German warriors to transcend the old conception of the human predicament and to glimpse a promised land beyond, where a new race forged in fire could inherit the Earth.

Europe at its best grew out of Christian civilization. The Christian myth formed the moral basis for an institutional order that dominated the continent and its natives. Within that order, a radically humanistic and increasingly critical spirit was distilled that precipitated both modern science and the demise of Christendom.

Western Christendom was embodied as the Holy Roman Empire, which preserved and extended the notional legacy of the old Roman Empire from a new base in and around the

Rhine Valley for a thousand years, until the warlord Napoleon dissolved it. The dissolution was the beginning of the end of Christian hegemony, which a century later took a mortal blow when the great war broke out that marked both the rise of Germany as the leading nation within Europe and the fall of the continental claim to global dominance.

Germany rose as a new industrial Reich to restore and replace the old Holy Roman Empire. James Hawes outlines its rise in his brisk and lively history of Germany from its ancient roots to recent months. The two German attempts to impose an imperial mastery by military force ended in humiliating failure, but the German claim to continental leadership in scientific and industrial power continues to this day. German nationalism was neutered but the strength of its people lived on.

The upstart German Reich that broke in two bloody waves also broke the back of Christian orthodoxy. German thinkers like Kant and Hegel had already bracketed the Christian myth within a secular cosmology, which activists like Marx and Lenin then pushed into historical prominence. Rebels like Nietzsche and Wagner outlined a pagan myth to rival old stories, and soon the Prussian warlords were up and running with the new rival. The superman prophecies of Zarathustra and the bombastic echoes of the Ring of the Nibelung went off like bombs, and the collateral damage was historic.

The Prussian warriors defeated imperial Russians in the first war for the Reich, but in doing so they let Lenin push the Bolsheviks into power in Russia. Soon the Soviet Union, under Stalin, became a bigger menace for Germany and Europe than Russian imperialists had ever been. The new problem was the messianic ideology of Marxism, freshly minted out of German philosophy, which threatened a violent end to the entire social order in historically Christian Europe.

For centuries, the tragedy behind Christian ascendancy was the marginalization of the Jewish people in Europe. Never in history has a people suffered so much for the sake of the idolization of one of its sons. The demise of the ruling narrative, and with it the eclipse of the Jewish God, led to a backlash of unprecedented ferocity. When Hitler and the Nazis accused Jews of seeking to replace the Christian bedtime stories with a Marxist litany of class war and expropriation, the dam burst, and genocide followed.

The price of this millennial rebellion was the violent demise of the murderous Third Reich. The surviving Germans paid it with a collective sigh of relief and moved on. The secular foundation of the new nation was secured and the historic reckoning with the God of Abraham looked to be done and dusted.

Two wars had scarred the continent and left the Europeans counting their dead. A third war threatened for another forty years, a prospect made more terrible by the nuclear stalemate of the superpowers triggered by older German advances in nuclear physics and in the rocket-powered delivery systems for nuclear warheads. The twofold rise and fall of the Reich had pushed the art of war to new heights and made waves around the planet. Atom bombs and the Holocaust set new tidemarks around a toxic tsunami of inhumanity that left the old humanisms struggling to find firm ground.

Forty years was long enough to let the lava from the hot wars set solid in a strange new landscape. Planners had to think globally, to consider missiles from Siberia landing in Washington or submarines from California nuking Shanghai. Europe was just a regional war zone, where the Red Star and White Star superpowers would let tank warfare escalate in days to nuclear exchanges that left Germany a radioactive desert. Such looming catastrophe concentrates the mind, and Germans worked hard to build a bastion of prosperity that left only a diminishing image of the old Reich in the rear-view mirror.

Even in the freeze forced on it by the threat of mutual assured destruction, the third war wrought massive global effects. Hot wars raged in Korea and Vietnam, guerrilla wars flared in a dozen patches as Marxist rebels rose and fell, Muslim client states in the Mideast region were thrown repeatedly into turmoil, and the potent colossus of modern China began its slow sunrise from the ashes of civilizational defeat following two centuries of humiliation at the hands of European and Japanese imperialists. Meanwhile, the Soviet empire ruled from the Kremlin bankrupted itself in military competition against the United States and its European allies.

The third war was won in space, with the triumph of the Apollo program to put men on the Moon, although it took twenty years for the victory to be consummated in the fall of the Berlin Wall, the liberation of Eastern Europe, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The rocketry on show with Apollo, as well as in the Soviet space program, as well as in the respective missile arsenals of the superpowers, had German roots. The NASA missions to explore the solar system in the years that followed were the fruit of the Apollo flower. European science and technology had taken humans off Earth and into the heavens.

Two Religions

Christianity was not the only moral order with universal ambition. Islam arose as an offshoot order, based on a closely related moral claim, stressing not so much love of life and denial of death as humility in life and acceptance of death. Both orders presupposed that our souls adopted a human incarnation, and both promoted an evangelical or expansionist mission. Both faiths gave rise to empires that rose and fell in martial competition for more than a thousand years and continued into modern times.

Now that game is over. It may take time for stubborn believers to accept the truth, but Islam no less than Christianity is doomed by the critical spirit that has come to dominate the human world in the age of Apollo. The deepest truths of spiritual life and human incarnation were shared between the faiths, and indeed with other religious orders worldwide, but they are also well enough understood in science, and in particular in the latest work in neuroscience, to create a sense that nothing of existential value will be lost when the old faiths die. The last believers can rest in peace.

Unfortunately, the Christian world has a head start of some five hundred years in understanding and accepting this dynamic of decline. Many people in the Islamic world still see it as a betrayal of eternal truths and a violent push toward oblivion. They fight back against the Nietzschean revaluation of all values and hence deface the modern world with

terrorist acts and jihadist insurgencies. Given the accelerating pace of change in a rapidly globalizing world, we cannot afford to wait five hundred years for these laggards to learn some sense.

Worse is yet to come. Christians have accepted the separation of church and state for centuries, but for Muslims this is a new and repugnant concept. Their faith is essentially political. It prescribes specific rules of conduct and promotes an ordering of personal priorities in ways that fail to mesh with the increasingly pervasive accommodations required of citizens within a modern state. Controversies, not all of them well founded, over the building of mosques, intrusive calls to prayer, repressive dress codes, barbaric sexual attitudes, murderous family values, and much more make integration of Muslim minorities in European states a continuing nightmare with no end in sight.

None of this controversial nonsense has any valid basis in the spirituality that alone gives any special value to religious doctrine. The variety of religious practices worldwide shows that most of the practical traditions that have grown around their sacred founding inspirations are worthless husks in comparison with the core truths. They deserve no special treatment. They can be treated as robustly as any other social or political practice that has outgrown its usefulness or grown toxic as its circumstances change.

Both Christianity and Islam have roots in Judaism. Given the hostility to Jews that once stained the Christian world and still pervades the Muslim world, this deep and undeniable family relationship is ironic. Political issues regarding the modern state of Israel can be handled like political issues with any other state, leaving wider hostility to Jews lacking any reasonable foundation. This fact alone is reason enough to condemn the absence of concerted action across the Islamic world to stamp out what the wider world sees as pervasive antisemitism. Ironically again, the Arabs, the original host population for the Islamic faith, are themselves a Semitic people.

Europeans who in their own ways understand these issues with Islam are right to be concerned that the uncontrolled immigration of millions of Muslims into European communities is dangerous. With Nazi crimes against the Jews as a recent reminder of the possible outcome when things go wrong, no one in the governing elites of Europe can plead ignorance as to the horrendous risk they are taking. Extremists across the continent are beginning to demand that their governments throttle Muslim immigration with the same energy as authorities would certainly muster to stem an incoming tide of people infected with a medical condition that made them a mortal danger to themselves and others.

In short, Murray was right to flag up the danger posed by mass Muslim immigration.

One World

Europeans will need to react intelligently to the danger if they are to avoid a reprise of the horrors that accompanied the sunset of the Jewish God on the old continent. Happily, the case seems strong for saying the spectacular sunset of the Third Reich was a unique event. The twilight gloom in which the ghost of Allah will be banished can veil a lesser struggle.

The new world born with the reunification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union is a globalized order on the planetary surface. Its base in secular science leaves traditional humanisms even of the secular sort groping for moral support. The old doctrinal certainties of Christianity and Islam, with their roots in the human predicament, are eroding fast in face of the post-human, trans-human, superhuman, cyborg future zooming toward us with alarming speed. The angels of our better nature preach a new gospel of transcendence, perhaps to a digital eternity in a global mind beyond the patriarchal God of Abraham.

Many doctrines in science are still in flux. We can expect big new discoveries and radical paradigm shifts in the sciences as the doctrines settle down. But they are already far firmer and readier to take real load than they were a century ago, when the agonies of a millennial bloodbath sunset began. The load of ancient doctrinal baggage schlepped into Europe by the devotees of Islam is not so heavy as to stop the sturdy spaceship of science from launching us all into a brighter future.

Europe is no longer a cultural world hosting a separate civilization. It is now a region on a spherical map, part of a global biofilm around a six-zettaton rockball orbiting the Sun. As a cultural host, Europe is coequal with America and China, and one day with other centers, depending on the way the cultural cookies crumble. Cloud technology ensures that the regions and the centers will integrate, on pain of their pitiful demise, to form a global community in which the human story will one day find a fitting end.

No Fear

As I said at the start, human generations yet to come will look back on our era as a Golden Age, when organic minds were in control and the machines were still our trusty tools. In their five-century liftoff from Christian slumber, Europeans have propelled a starship of unprecedented power into heavens that once seemed home to unapproachable gods. Our human souls will merge in a digital cloud as fluid formations of photons (assuming photonic technology will soon replace electronics) to animate bionic and robotic bodies both on Earth and on planetary surfaces yet unknown.

All this depends on keeping up the momentum of the great liftoff until the last swaddling rags of old-time religion are replaced by new bionic skins that can interface between photon souls and robot bodies. The time has come for venerable religious traditions to take on new and humbler roles as social clubs to help the last natural humans find warm psychic homes in the posthuman reality. These clubs will not give gods a role beyond the realm of myth, except in holy visions of the sort that psychedelic drugs bring on.

In any serious theology, God is universal or nothing. The universe of modern science is a strangely remote and intangible entity, a sort of asymptotic ideal beyond our concepts, with none of the anthropomorphic attributes that made a patriarchal God seem so congenial to billions of followers. God may seem alive to believers who follow the old traditions, but they face an impossible task if they seek to disentangle their personal grasp of God from the psychological and other confusions that bedevil any subjective experience of divinity.

As for lesser gods, of the sort whose busts clutter Valhalla, we can surely cultivate an easy tolerance. Myths are ten a penny in the modern world, and if people feel a need to worship Elvis or the Flying Spaghetti Monster that is their concern. Again, however, the Muslims present a problem, for it is a firm part of their tradition to remain intolerant of any lesser god than God.

Coming back down to Earth, to the bloodstained soil of contemporary Europe, the challenge of integrating millions of Muslims is a reasonable one, in principle. In practice, opportunities to stray from the narrow path of virtue are legion, and all of us will need to tread carefully. As I see it, the key to getting it right is to cultivate, through education, a proper recognition and respect for the superiority of the foundations of modern scientific knowledge compared to the roots of all the old religions. Those faiths often converged on deep truths, but they also diverged on almost everything else, and from a secular perspective the divergent ideas and practices are now in urgent need of a decent burial.

There is real hope here. Muslims in their own Golden Age many centuries ago brought us new advances in astronomy and mathematics, as well as medical science, and also gave backward Europeans a new acquaintance with the classic works of Ancient Greece that seeded the European liftoff to the modern world.

A shining path to a posthuman Golden Age lies ready to be trod. Let young Muslims across Europe and around the globe begin their long march to modernity.

I trust their trek will leave Murray's dystopia far behind. None of us need fear the rise of Islam in a Fortress Europe built on German strength.

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