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"Consequences of Mass Arab Immigration to Europe"

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Two recently released official reports (European and Arab), which evaluated current demographic characteristics and future trends suggest that Europe faces a potential Arab immigrant onslaught, perhaps as great as America endured during the European immigration of the 19th and early 20th centuries. An American report projects future stagnation of Middle Eastern economies, all factors causing Arab restlessness.

Europe's aging population will continue to be labor-thirsty for the next two decades; the population of the Arab Middle East is exploding and looking to move. If Arab supply meets European demand over the next twenty years, what are the implications? European immigrants to the United States altered American culture, urban demographics, spawned nativism, and changed the nature of domestic politics. There is no reason to believe an Arab migration of undefined magnitude will not similarly alter Europe's political, social, and cultural landscape over the next quarter century. In the meantime, chances are remote that the EU will embrace a master plan to restructure Arab societies to stem the Arab youth's desire to immigrate.

At the end of May, the European Commission published its "Social Situation Report 2002" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2002/jun/inbrief_en.pdf). Before 2015, Europe's estimated population growth will be stagnant or even negative in most EU regions. The size of the EU's population will change more slowly than the age structure. Further, by 2015, one in three Europeans of working age will be over 50. In 15 years, the number of EU citizens between 20 and 29 is estimated to fall by 20 percent, while the population group aged 50 to 64 will expand by 25 percent. Already, Immigration has accounted for 70 percent of the EU population growth in the past five years, with most of those immigrants going to Italy, Britain, and Germany. Three or four working people will be necessary to maintain each retired person, and the report confirms that this will become impossible if current trends continue. And the report suggested that immigration in the coming years would not offset EU labor requirements.

The "Arab Development Report" (ADR) [<http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/PR2.pdf>], released in July 2002 and written after 18 months of painstaking work by a team of Arab scholars and intellectuals, noted that a "mismatch between aspirations and their fulfillment

has in some cases led to [Arab] alienation, apathy and discontent." The Arab world today is composed of 280 million Arabs, with that population likely to grow to 400-450 million Arabs by 2020. Today, in 22 Arab countries, 38 percent of the total Arab population is under the age of 14, while in the U.S., with about the same total population as all the Arab world, only 14.1 percent are in the same age cohort.

The ADR noted that in 1999 the combined GDP of all Arab countries stood at \$591.2 billion, less than the total GDP of Spain. Israel, with a population of six million, enjoyed a GDP equal to one-sixth of the entire Arab world. Over the last decade, growth in per capita income in the Middle East was the lowest in the world, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa. Significantly for Europe, the ADR noted that "more than 15% of the Arab labor force is unemployed...with few job opportunities at home, just over half of the young people in the Arab world (13-20 year olds), want to emigrate to industrialized countries, with Europe, the UK, and the U.S. as the most desirable areas for relocation. The supposition is likely that the most literate and talented Arabs will create a "brain drain," leaving the poor and un(der)educated in the Middle East. With great disparities among Arab states, "poverty and deprivation in their many forms remain real in many Arab societies."

In judging the current and future state of affairs in the Middle East, the CIA Report, "Global Trends" (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/globaltrends2015/#link13d>), dated December 2000, noted that by 2015, "Middle East populations will be significantly larger, poorer, more urban, and more disillusioned...job placement is compounded by weak educational systems producing a generation lacking the technical and problem-solving skills required for economic growth...Attracting foreign direct investment will also be difficult: except for the energy sector, investors will tend to shy away from these countries, discouraged by overbearing state sectors; heavy, opaque, and arbitrary government regulation; underdeveloped financial sectors; inadequate physical infrastructure; and the threat of political instability."

Should and will the EU try and stem the tide of massive Arab immigration by pushing to change the economic and political status quo pervasive today in Middle Eastern and North African states? Are there at present Middle Eastern autocrats with the vision required to open up their societies beyond minor reforms in human rights, civil society creation, privatization, etc?

Can the EU, along with others, vigorously insist that conservative ruling elites institute economic and political liberalization? Will EU countries take the risk of pushing for revolutionary change in how the Arab states operate (curb bloated bureaucracies, broadly encourage and protect a free press and free speech while reducing dominating presence of the pervasive security

service)?

Chances are slim that the EU and other outside powers like the U.S. will deviate from a century-long policy preference to protect what the well-known Middle Eastern historian, Albert Hourani, called "the politics of notables." Look at the deep EU opposition to toppling Saddam Hussein. EU politicians generally oppose any effort to change the existing status quo. Change brings the prospects of temporary destabilization. That would inevitably interrupt vital commercial relations and trade in Middle Eastern energy sources at reasonable prices. EU policies toward the Middle East in general prefer constructive dialogue. Thus, external initiatives for revolutionary change in Arab governance is highly unlikely. Terrified of economic and political liberalization, Arab leaders of their own accord are unlikely to institute such massive changes in governance on their own. And even if there were massive structural changes that offer new economic opportunities in the Middle East and North African region, nothing guarantees either a decrease in the Arab youth's quest to immigrate or a curb on the current Arab demographic explosion.

So what happens when European labor demand meets Arab supply over the next two decades and beyond? In Europe, effects will come national and local elections, delivery of health care, urban growth, pressures on infrastructure needs, real estate prices, labor issues, cultural changes, and demands on social protection packages; externally mass immigration will influence common or separate policies toward immigration, asylum, exiles, foreign policy options toward Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and individual Arab and Moslem states. Population rich Arab states will again bolster sagging economies with remittances back home as they did during the oil price rises of the 1970s and early 1980s. Then what?

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