

Some cultures might be better than others

Though globalisation has greatly reduced cultural differences across the planet, it has simultaneously made it far easier to encounter strangers and become upset by their oddities. The difference between Anglo-Saxon England and the Indian Pala Empire was far greater than the difference between modern Britain and modern India – but British Airways didn't offer direct flights between Delhi and London in the days of King Alfred the Great.

As more and more humans cross more and more borders in search of jobs, security and a better future, the need to confront, assimilate or expel strangers strains political systems and collective identities that were shaped in less fluid times. Nowhere is the problem more poignant than in Europe. The European Union was built on the promise to transcend the cultural differences between French, Germans, Spanish and Greeks. It might collapse due to its inability to contain the cultural differences between Europeans and migrants from Africa and the Middle East. Ironically, it has been Europe's very success in building a prosperous multicultural system that drew so many migrants in the first place. Syrians want to emigrate to Germany rather than to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia or Japan not because Germany is closer or wealthier than all the other potential destinations – but because Germany has a far better record of welcoming and absorbing immigrants.

The growing wave of refugees and immigrants produces mixed reactions among Europeans and sparks bitter discussions about Europe's identity and future. Some Europeans demand that Europe slam its gates shut: are they betraying Europe's multicultural and tolerant ideals, or are they just taking sensible steps to prevent disaster? Others call for opening the gates wider: are they faithful to the core European values, or are they guilty of saddling the European project with impossible expectations? This discussion about immigration often degenerates into a shouting match in which neither side hears the other. To clarify matters, it would perhaps be helpful to view immigration as a deal with three basic conditions or terms:

Term 1: The host country allows the immigrants in.

Term 2: In return, the immigrants must embrace at least the core norms and values of the host country, even if that means giving up some of their traditional norms and values.

Term 3: If the immigrants assimilate to a sufficient degree, over time they become equal and full members of the host country. 'They' become 'us'.

These three terms give rise to three distinct debates about the exact meaning of each term. A fourth debate concerns the fulfilment of the terms. When people argue about immigration, they often confuse the four debates, so that nobody understands what the argument is really about. It is therefore best to look at each of these debates separately.

Debate 1: The first clause of the immigration deal says simply that the host country allows immigrants in. But should this be understood as a duty or a favour? Is the host country obliged to open its gates to everybody, or does it have the right to pick and choose, and even to halt immigration altogether? Pro-immigrationists seem to think that countries have a moral duty to accept not just refugees, but also people from poverty-stricken lands who seek jobs and a better future. Especially in a globalised world, all humans have moral obligations towards all other humans, and those shirking these obligations are egoists or even racists.

In addition, many pro-immigrationists stress that it is impossible to completely stop immigration, and no matter how many walls and fences we build, desperate people will always find a way through. So it is better to legalise immigration and deal with it openly, than to create a vast underworld of human trafficking, illegal workers and paperless children.

Anti-immigrationists reply that if you use sufficient force, you can completely stop immigration, and except perhaps in the case of refugees fleeing brutal persecution in a neighbouring country, you are never obliged to open your door. Turkey may have a moral duty to allow desperate Syrian refugees to cross its border. But if these refugees then try to move on to Sweden, the Swedes are not bound to accept them. As for migrants who seek jobs and welfare, it is totally up to the host country whether it wants them in or not, and under what conditions.

Anti-immigrationists stress that one of the most basic rights of every human collective is to defend itself against invasion, whether in the form of armies or migrants. The Swedes have worked very hard and made numerous sacrifices in order to build a prosperous liberal democracy, and if the Syrians have failed to do the same, this is not the Swedes' fault. If Swedish voters don't want more Syrian immigrants in – for whatever reason – it is their right to refuse them entry. And if they do accept some immigrants, it should be absolutely clear that this is a favour Sweden extends rather than an obligation it fulfils. Which means that immigrants who are allowed into Sweden should feel extremely grateful for whatever they get, instead of coming with a list of demands as if they own the place.

Moreover, say the anti-immigrationists, a country can have whatever immigration policy it wants, screening immigrants not just for their criminal records or professional talents, but even for things like religion. If a country like Israel wants to allow in only Jews, and a country like Poland agrees to absorb Middle Eastern refugees on condition that they are Christians, this may seem distasteful, but it is perfectly within the rights of the Israeli or Polish voters.

What complicates matters is that in many cases people want to have their cake and eat it. Numerous countries turn a blind eye to illegal immigration, or even accept foreign workers on a temporary basis, because they want to benefit from the foreigners' energy, talents and cheap labour. However, the countries then refuse to legalise the status of these people, saying that they don't want immigration. In the long run, this could create hierarchical societies in which an upper class of full citizens exploits an underclass of powerless foreigners, as happens today in Qatar and several other Gulf States.

As long as this debate isn't settled, it is extremely difficult to answer all subsequent questions about immigration. Since pro-immigrationists think that people have a right to immigrate to another land if they so wish, and host countries have a duty to absorb them, they react with moral outrage when people's right to immigrate is violated, and when countries fail to perform their duty of absorption. Anti-immigrationists are astounded by such views. They see immigration as a privilege, and absorption as a favour. Why accuse people of being racists or fascists just because they refuse entry into their own country?

Of course, even if allowing immigrants in constitutes a favour rather than a duty, once the immigrants settle down the host country gradually incurs numerous duties towards them and their descendants. Thus you cannot justify anti-Semitism in the USA today by arguing that 'we did your great-grandmother a favour by letting her into this country in 1910, so we can now treat you any way we like'.

Debate 2: The second clause of the immigration deal says that if they are allowed in, the immigrants have an obligation to assimilate into the local culture. But how far should assimilation go? If immigrants move from a patriarchal society to a liberal society, must they become feminist? If they come from a deeply religious society, need they adopt a secular world view? Should they abandon their traditional dress codes and food taboos? Anti-immigrationists tend to place the bar high, whereas pro-immigrationists place it much lower.

Pro-immigrationists argue that Europe itself is extremely diverse, and its native populations have a wide spectrum of opinions, habits and values. This is exactly what makes Europe vibrant and strong. Why should immigrants be forced to adhere to some imaginary European identity that few Europeans actually live up to? Do you want to force Muslim immigrants to the UK to become Christian, when many British citizens hardly ever go to church? Do you want to demand that immigrants from the Punjab give up their curry and masala in favour of fish and chips and Yorkshire pudding? If Europe has any real core values, then these are the liberal values of tolerance and freedom, which imply that Europeans should show tolerance towards the immigrants too, and allow them as much freedom as possible to follow their own traditions, provided these do not harm the freedoms and rights of other people.

Anti-immigrationists agree that tolerance and freedom are the most important European values, and accuse many immigrant groups – especially from Muslim countries – of intolerance, misogyny, homophobia and anti-Semitism. Precisely because Europe cherishes tolerance, it cannot allow too many intolerant people in. While a tolerant society can manage small illiberal minorities, if the number of such extremists exceeds a certain threshold, the whole nature of society changes. If Europe allows in too many immigrants from the Middle East, it will end up looking like the Middle East.

Other anti-immigrationists go much further. They point out that a national community is far more than a collection of people who tolerate each other. Therefore it is not enough that immigrants adhere to European standards of

tolerance. They must also adopt many of the unique characteristics of British, German or Swedish culture, whatever these may be. By allowing them in, the local culture is taking upon itself a big risk and a huge expense. There is no reason it should destroy itself as well. It offers eventual full equality so it demands full assimilation. If the immigrants have an issue with certain quirks of British, German or Swedish culture, they are welcome to go elsewhere.

The two key issues of this debate are the disagreement about immigrant intolerance and the disagreement about European identity. If immigrants are indeed guilty of incurable intolerance, many liberal Europeans who currently favour immigration will sooner or later come round to oppose it bitterly. Conversely, if most immigrants prove to be liberal and broad-minded in their attitude to religion, gender and politics, this will disarm some of the most effective arguments against immigration.

This will still leave open, however, the question of Europe's unique national identities. Tolerance is a universal value. Are there any unique French norms and values that should be accepted by anyone immigrating to France, and are there unique Danish norms and values that immigrants to Denmark must embrace? As long as Europeans are bitterly divided about this question, they can hardly have a clear policy about immigration. Conversely, once Europeans know who they are, 500 million Europeans should have no difficulty absorbing a million refugees – or turning them away.

Debate 3: The third clause of the immigration deal says that if immigrants indeed make a sincere effort to assimilate – and in particular to adopt the value of tolerance – the host country is duty-bound to treat them as first-class citizens. But exactly how much time needs to pass before the immigrants become full members of society? Should first-generation immigrants from Algeria feel aggrieved if they are still not seen as fully French after twenty years in the country? How about third-generation immigrants whose grandparents came to France in the 1970s?

Pro-immigrationists tend to demand a speedy acceptance, whereas anti-immigrationists want a much longer probation period. For pro-immigrationists, if third-generation immigrants are not seen and treated as equal citizens, this means that the host country is not fulfilling its obligations, and if this results in tensions, hostility and even violence – the host country has nobody to blame but its own bigotry. For anti-immigrationists, these inflated expectations are a large part of the problem. The immigrants should be patient. If your grandparents arrived here just forty years ago, and you now riot in the streets because you think you are not treated as a native, then you have failed the test.

The root issue of this debate concerns the gap between personal timescale and collective timescale. From the viewpoint of human collectives, forty years is a short time. It is hard to expect society to fully absorb foreign groups within a few decades. Past civilisations that assimilated foreigners and made them equal citizens – such as Imperial Rome, the Muslim caliphate, the Chinese empires and the United States – all took centuries rather than decades to accomplish the transformation.

From a personal viewpoint, however, forty years can be an eternity. For a teenager born in France twenty years after her grandparents immigrated there, the journey from Algiers to Marseilles is ancient history. She was born here, all her friends have been born here, she speaks French rather than Arabic, and she has never even been to Algeria. France is the only home she has ever known. And now people say to her it's not her home, and that she should go 'back' to a place she never inhabited?

It's as if you take a seed of a eucalyptus tree from Australia, and plant it in France. From an ecological perspective, eucalyptus trees are an invading species, and it will take generations before botanists reclassify them as native European plants. Yet from the viewpoint of the individual tree, it is French. If you don't water it with French water, it will wither. If you try to uproot it, you will discover it has struck its roots deep in the French soil, just like the local oaks and pines.

Debate 4: On top of all these disagreements regarding the exact definition of the immigration deal, the ultimate question is whether the deal is actually working. Are both sides living up to their obligations?

Anti-immigrationists tend to argue that the immigrants are not fulfilling term No. 2. They are not making a sincere effort to assimilate, and too many of them stick to intolerant and bigoted world views. Hence the host country has no reason to fulfil term No. 3 (to treat them as first-class citizens), and has every reason to reconsider term No. 1 (to

allow them in). If people from a particular culture have consistently proved themselves unwilling to live up to the immigration deal, why allow more of them in, and create an even bigger problem?

Pro-immigrationists reply that it is the host country that fails to fulfil its side of the deal. Despite the honest efforts of the vast majority of immigrants to assimilate, the hosts are making it difficult for them to do so, and worse still, those immigrants who successfully assimilate are still treated as second-class citizens even in the second and third generations. It is of course possible that both sides are not living up to their commitments, thereby fuelling each other's suspicions and resentments in an increasingly vicious circle.

This fourth debate cannot be resolved before clarifying the exact definition of the three terms. As long as we don't know whether absorption is a duty or a favour; what level of assimilation is required from immigrants; and how quickly host countries should treat them as equal citizens – we cannot judge whether the two sides are fulfilling their obligations. An additional problem concerns accounting. When evaluating the immigration deal, both sides give far more weight to violations than to compliance. If a million immigrants are law-abiding citizens, but one hundred join terrorist groups and attack the host country, does it mean that on the whole the immigrants are complying with the terms of the deal, or violating it? If a third-generation immigrant walks down the street a thousand times without being molested, but once in a while some racist shouts abuse at her, does it mean that the native population is accepting or rejecting immigrants?

Yet underneath all these debates lurks a far more fundamental question, which concerns our understanding of human culture. Do we enter the immigration debate with the assumption that all cultures are inherently equal, or do we think that some cultures might well be superior to others? When Germans argue over the absorption of a million Syrian refugees, can they ever be justified in thinking that German culture is in some way better than Syrian culture?

From racism to culturism

A century ago Europeans took it for granted that some races – most notably the white race – were inherently superior to others. After 1945 such views increasingly became anathema. Racism was seen as not only morally abysmal, but also as scientifically bankrupt. Life scientists, and in particular geneticists, have produced very strong scientific evidence that the biological differences between Europeans, Africans, Chinese and Native Americans are negligible.

At the same time, however, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, behavioural economists and even brain scientists have accumulated a wealth of data for the existence of significant differences between human cultures. Indeed, if all human cultures were essentially the same, why would we even need anthropologists and historians? Why invest resources in studying trivial differences? At the very least, we should stop financing all those expensive field excursions to the South Pacific and the Kalahari Desert, and be content with studying people in Oxford or Boston. If cultural differences are insignificant, then whatever we discover about Harvard undergraduates should be true of Kalahari hunter-gatherers too.

Upon reflection, most people concede the existence of at least some significant differences between human cultures, in things ranging from sexual mores to political habits. How then should we treat these differences? Cultural relativists argue that difference doesn't imply hierarchy, and we should never prefer one culture over another. Humans may think and behave in various ways, but we should celebrate this diversity, and give equal value to all beliefs and practices. Unfortunately, such broad-minded attitudes cannot stand the test of reality. Human diversity may be great when it comes to cuisine and poetry, but few would see witch-burning, infanticide or slavery as fascinating human idiosyncrasies that should be protected against the encroachments of global capitalism and coca-colonialism.

Or consider the way different cultures relate to strangers, immigrants and refugees. Not all cultures are characterised by exactly the same level of acceptance. German culture in the early twenty-first century is more tolerant of strangers and more welcoming of immigrants than Saudi culture. It is far easier for a Muslim to emigrate to Germany than it is for a Christian to emigrate to Saudi Arabia. Indeed, even for a Muslim refugee from Syria it is probably easier to emigrate to Germany than to Saudi Arabia, and since 2011 Germany has taken in many more Syrian refugees than has Saudi Arabia (1). Similarly, the weight of evidence suggests that the culture of California in the early twenty-first century is more immigrant-friendly than the culture of Japan. Hence if you think that it is good

to tolerate strangers and welcome immigrants, shouldn't you also think that at least in this regard, German culture is superior to Saudi culture, and Californian culture is better than Japanese culture?

Moreover, even when two cultural norms are equally valid in theory, in the practical context of immigration it might still be justified to judge the host culture as better. Norms and values that are appropriate in one country just don't work well under different circumstances. Let's look closely at a concrete example. In order not to fall prey to well-established prejudices, let's imagine two fictional countries: Coldia and Warmland. The two countries have many cultural differences, among which is their attitude to human relations and interpersonal conflict. Coldians are educated from infancy that if you get into conflict with somebody at school, at work, or even in your family, the best thing is to repress it. You should avoid shouting, expressing rage, or confronting the other person – angry outbursts just make things worse. It's better to work with your own feelings, while allowing things to cool down. In the meantime, limit your contact with the person in question, and if contact is unavoidable, be terse but polite, and avoid sensitive issues.

Warmlanders, by contrast, are educated from infancy to externalise conflicts. If you find yourself in conflict, don't let it simmer and don't repress anything. Use the first opportunity to vent your emotions openly. It is OK to get angry, to shout, and to tell the other person exactly how you feel. This is the only way to work things through together, in an honest and direct way. One day of shouting can resolve a conflict that may otherwise fester for years, and though head-on confrontation is never pleasant, you will all feel much better afterwards.

Both these methods have their pros and cons, and it is hard to say that one is always better than the other. What might happen, though, when a Warmlander emigrates to Coldia, and gets a job in a Coldian firm?

Whenever a conflict arises with a co-worker, the Warmlander bangs on the table and yells at the top of his voice, expecting that this will focus attention on the problem and help to resolve it quickly. Several years later a senior position falls vacant. Though the Warmlander has all the necessary qualifications, the boss prefers to give the promotion to a Coldian employee. When asked about it, she explains: 'Yes, the Warmlander has many talents, but he also has a serious problem with human relations. He is hot-tempered, creates unnecessary tensions around him, and disturbs our corporate culture.' The same fate befalls other Warmlander immigrants to Coldia. Most of them remain in junior positions, or fail to find any job at all, because managers presuppose that if they are Warmlanders, they would probably be hot-tempered and problematic employees. Since the Warmlanders never reach senior positions, it is difficult for them to change the Coldian corporate culture.

Much the same thing happens to Coldians who emigrate to Warmland. A Coldian starting to work in a Warmland firm quickly acquires the reputation of a snob or a cold fish, and makes few if any friends. People think that he is insincere, or that he lacks basic human-relation skills. He never advances to senior positions, and he therefore never gets the opportunity to change the corporate culture. Warmland managers conclude that most Coldians are unfriendly or shy, and prefer not to hire them to positions that require contact with customers or close cooperation with other employees.

Both these cases may seem to smack of racism. But in fact, they are not racist. They are 'culturist'. People continue to conduct a heroic struggle against traditional racism without noticing that the battlefield has shifted. Traditional racism is waning, but the world is now full of 'culturists'.

Traditional racism was firmly grounded in biological theories. In the 1890s or 1930s it was widely believed in countries such as Britain, Australia and the USA that some heritable biological trait makes Africans and Chinese people innately less intelligent, less enterprising and less moral than Europeans. The problem was in their blood. Such views enjoyed political respectability as well as widespread scientific backing. Today, in contrast, while many individuals still make such racist assertions, they have lost all their scientific backing and most of their political respectability – unless they are rephrased in cultural terms. Saying that black people tend to commit crimes because they have substandard genes is out; saying that they tend to commit crimes because they come from dysfunctional subcultures is very much in.

In the USA, for instance, some parties and leaders openly support discriminatory policies and often make denigrating remarks about African Americans, Latinos and Muslims – but they will rarely if ever say that there is something wrong with their DNA. The problem is alleged to be with their culture. Thus when President Trump described Haiti, El

Salvador and some parts of Africa as 'shithole countries', he was apparently offering the public a reflection on the culture of these places rather than on their genetic make-up (2). On another occasion Trump said about Mexican immigrants to the USA that 'When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending the best. They're sending people that have lots of problems and they're bringing those problems. They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime. They're rapists and some, I assume, are good people.' This is a very offensive claim to make, but it is a sociologically rather than a biologically offensive claim. Trump doesn't imply that Mexican blood is a bar to goodness – only that good Mexicans tend to stay south of the Rio Grande (3).

The human body – the Latino body, the African body, the Chinese body – still stands at the centre of the debate. Skin colour matters a lot. Walking down a New York street with lots of melanin pigment in your skin means that wherever you are heading, the police might view you with extra suspicion. But the likes of both President Trump and President Obama will explain the significance of skin colour in cultural and historical terms. The police view your skin colour with suspicion not for any biological reason, but rather because of history. Presumably, the Obama camp will explain that police prejudice is an unfortunate legacy of historical crimes such as slavery, while the Trump camp will explain that black criminality is an unfortunate legacy of historical errors committed by white liberals and black communities. In any case, even if you are actually a tourist from Delhi who knows nothing about American history, you will have to deal with the consequences of that history.

The shift from biology to culture is not just a meaningless change of jargon. It is a profound shift with far-reaching practical consequences, some good, some bad. For starters, culture is more malleable than biology. This means, on the one hand, that present-day culturists might be more tolerant than traditional racists – if only the 'others' adopt our culture, we will accept them as our equals. On the other hand, it could result in far stronger pressures on the 'others' to assimilate, and in far harsher criticism of their failure to do so.

You can hardly blame a dark-skinned person for not whitening his skin, but people can and do accuse Africans or Muslims of failing to adopt the norms and values of Western culture. Which is not to say that such accusations are necessarily justified. In many cases, there is little reason to adopt the dominant culture, and in many other cases, it is an all but impossible mission. African Americans from a poverty-stricken slum who honestly try to fit into the hegemonic American culture might first find their way blocked by institutional discrimination – only to be accused later on that they did not make sufficient effort, and so have nobody but themselves to blame for their troubles.

A second key difference between talking about biology and talking about culture is that unlike traditional racist bigotry, culturist arguments might occasionally make good sense, as in the case of Warmland and Coldia. Warmlanders and Coldians really have different cultures, characterised by different styles of human relations. Since human relations are crucial to many jobs, is it unethical for a Warmlander firm to penalise Coldians for behaving in accordance with their cultural legacy?

Anthropologists, sociologists and historians feel extremely uneasy about this issue. On the one hand, it all sounds dangerously close to racism. On the other hand, culturism has a much firmer scientific basis than racism, and particularly scholars in the humanities and social sciences cannot deny the existence and importance of cultural differences.

Of course, even if we accept the validity of some culturist claims, we do not have to accept all of them. Many culturist claims suffer from three common flaws. First, culturists often confuse local superiority with objective superiority. Thus in the local context of Warmland, the Warmland method of conflict resolution may well be superior to the Coldian method, in which case a Warmland firm operating in Warmland has a good reason to discriminate against introverted employees (which will disproportionately penalise Coldian immigrants). However, that does not mean that the Warmland method is objectively superior. The Warmlanders could perhaps learn a thing or two from the Coldians, and if circumstances change – e.g. the Warmland firm goes global and opens branches in many different countries – diversity could suddenly become an asset.

Second, when you clearly define a yardstick, a time, and a place, culturist claims may well be empirically sound. But all too often people adopt very general culturist claims, which make little sense. Thus saying that 'Coldian culture is less tolerant of public angry outbursts than Warmland culture' is a reasonable claim, but it is far less reasonable to say that 'Muslim culture is very intolerant'. The latter claim is just far too hazy. What do we mean by 'intolerant'? Intolerant of whom, or what? A culture can be intolerant towards religious minorities and unusual political views,

while simultaneously being very tolerant towards obese people or the elderly. And what do we mean by 'Muslim culture'? Are we talking about the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century? The Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century? Pakistan in the early twenty-first century? Finally, what is the benchmark? If we care about tolerance towards religious minorities, and compare the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century with western Europe in the sixteenth century, we would conclude that Muslim culture is extremely tolerant. If we compare Afghanistan under the Taliban to contemporary Denmark, we would reach a very different conclusion.

Yet the worst problem with culturist claims is that despite their statistical nature they are all too often used to prejudge individuals. When a Warmlander native and a Coldian immigrant apply for the same position in a Warmlander firm, the manager may prefer to hire the Warmlander because 'Coldians are frosty and unsociable'. Even if statistically this is true, maybe this particular Coldian is actually far more warm and outgoing than this particular Warmlander? While culture is important, people are also shaped by their genes and their unique personal history. Individuals often defy statistical stereotypes. It makes sense for a firm to prefer sociable to stony employees, but it does not make sense to prefer Warmlanders to Coldians.

All this, however, modifies particular culturist claims without discrediting culturism as a whole. Unlike racism, which is an unscientific prejudice, culturist arguments may sometimes be quite sound. If we look at statistics and discover that Warmlander firms have few Coldians in senior positions, this may result not from racist discrimination, but from good judgement. Should Coldian immigrants feel resentment at this situation, and claim that Warmland is renegeing on the immigration deal? Should we force Warmlander firms to hire more Coldian managers through 'affirmative action' laws, in the hope of cooling down Warmland's hot-tempered business culture? Or perhaps the fault lies with Coldian immigrants failing to assimilate into the local culture, and we should therefore make a greater and more forceful effort to inculcate in Coldian children Warmlander norms and values?

Coming back from the realm of fiction to the realm of facts, we see that the European debate about immigration is far from being a clear-cut battle between good and evil. It would be wrong to tar all anti-immigrationists as 'fascists', just as it would be wrong to depict all pro-immigrationists as committed to 'cultural suicide'. Therefore, the debate about immigration should not be conducted as an uncompromising struggle about some non-negotiable moral imperative. It is a discussion between two legitimate political positions, which should be decided through standard democratic procedures. At present, it is far from clear whether Europe can find a middle path that would enable it to keep its gates open to strangers without being destabilised by people who don't share its values. If Europe succeeds in finding such a path, perhaps its formula could be copied on the global level. If the European project fails, however, it would indicate that belief in the liberal values of freedom and tolerance is not enough to resolve the cultural conflicts of the world and to unite humankind in the face of nuclear war, ecological collapse and technological disruption. If Greeks and Germans cannot agree on a common destiny, and if 500 million affluent Europeans cannot absorb a few million impoverished refugees, what chances do humans have of overcoming the far deeper conflicts that beset our global civilisation?

One thing that might help Europe and the world as a whole to integrate better and to keep borders and minds open, is to downplay the hysteria regarding terrorism. It would be extremely unfortunate if the European experiment in freedom and tolerance unravelled because of an overblown fear of terrorists. That would not only realise the terrorists' own goals, but would also give this handful of fanatics far too great a say about the future of humankind. Terrorism is the weapon of a marginal and weak segment of humanity. How did it come to dominate global politics?

Notes

1 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016', <http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34.pdf>, accessed 11 January 2018.

2 Lauren Gambini, 'Trump Pans Immigration Proposal as Bringing People from "Shithole Countries"', *Guardian*, 12 January 2018.

3 Tal Kopan, 'What Donald Trump Has Said about Mexico and Vice Versa', *CNN*, 31 August 2016.