

**Club of Three (Lord Weidenfeld): Meeting 'Club of Three and Demography',
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Statement Klaus J. Bade to Session I ('Demographic decline'): 'How far is immigration the solution, how far does it raise new problems?'

I will try to answer shortly to the third question of session I: "How far is immigration the solution, how far does it raise new problems?" This could in fact be understood as an invitation to strategic bombing you with a highly complicated demo-economic lecture on the intrinsic coherence of driving factors and follow-ups of the process of demographic transition. Instead of that, I will try to keep this short and in philanthropic prose.

To sum up first: Immigration is only to a minor extent part of the solution. It may, at the same time, raise new problems. Let me try to demonstrate this from a comparative perspective against the background of German and French experiences.

Trends in population development answer to a highly complex set of material and immaterial factors, driving forces and constellations. The demographic transition Europe is facing today is a long-term process running at least since the 18th century. The national experiences show some differences in this transition that was accelerated to a certain extent by the introduction of contraceptives (i.e. the pill) in the early 1970s.

The common consequences of demographic transition are sinking birth rates, increasing life expectancy, and, as a result of both, demographic ageing and shrinking of populations.

In the German case, the transition to degressive rates of population development leading to an absolute decline in population would have already started in the early 1970s – in case the Germans would have decided to stay among themselves. Instead of that, since the mid-1950s and especially since the 1960s, there was a growing immigration of so-called guest workers into the country. The increase of the foreign labour population was not to stop by the labour recruitment stop of 1973 because of family reunion in Germany and growing birth rates within the country. It was only for these high birth rates in the first generation of the foreign labour population that the demographic ageing and shrinking of the population in Germany could be slowed down for a certain period.

This balancing power, however, is rapidly fading for two reasons:

Reason 1: The immigrants, too, are growing older.

Reason 2: The birth rates of the second-generation immigrant population are steadily adapting to those of the majority population. This process will have finished in the third generation at the latest. (In large German cities, however, already up to 40 per cent of the newborn children have one foreign-born parent or grandparent).

What about the idea to maintain permanently the age pattern of today's German population by means of preferring young immigrants who will possibly be very fertile, at least in the first generation? It is a nonsense correlation and would end up with grotesque results: For many decades, several million immigrants would have to be admitted annually. And by the second half of the 21st century, the German population – surprise, surprise for Europe – would have increased from approximately 80 million today to nearly 300 million.

This absurd perspective shows that immigration is no solution to meet with the long-term structural trends of demographic transition. There are no possible short-term interventions against the auto-dynamics of these structural forces of population development – for the simple, but most important reason that in Germany, the potential parents of tomorrow's children needed to stabilise the age structure have already not been born, neither today nor yesterday.

The population development, therefore, is moving like a gigantic tanker on the ocean: Moving the wheel abruptly will only after many miles lead to the ship's slow reaction in changing its course ponderously.

Such changes of course should have two aims:

- firstly, the adaptation to structural changes linked to demographic ageing and shrinking of population and
- secondly, attempts to weaken these trends through economic, social and political interventions.

It is not possible to achieve more than a weakening by such interventions, because the development of birth rates does not only depend on material but also, and perhaps more importantly, on immaterial factors such as collective mentalities of the population.

Political changes of course are overdue since long in Germany. They have just been started during the last years in the sense of fundamental reforms concerning the economy, the labour market, the social systems and social policies as well as the education systems. The necessity of these reforms affects many issues: the shortening of education and training periods and, at the same time, postponement of retirement age which means extension of work life, intensifying qualifications also in the sense of lifelong learning, as well as a basic transformation of the social systems. (Unlike in other European countries, the social systems in Germany are still mainly dominated by the informal contract between the generations which, in fact, is no longer functioning today.)

Immigration is no alternative to these reforms, but it can buffer for some time the consequences of demographic ageing and shrinking of the population for the labour market and the social systems. Thus a little time can be gained for the implantation of indispensable reforms to adapt the systems to the changing population structure. The later these reforms are implemented, the more drastic will they be and the more politically difficult. In this respect, Germany still has to go a long and hard way on which, with the 'Agenda 2010', only the first step has been taken.

However, immigration only may be a help in this context,
 – if its professional and social features are structured as suitably as possible,
 – if it leads to successful integration and
 – if it can be limited to a certain extent.

The scopes for steering were and are, in Germany like in France, not very large, because of the family reunion from non-EU countries and because of the immigration of privileged minorities (in Germany for example ethnic Germans from the East and Jews from the former USSR) as well as of refugees and asylum seekers. And we have to see to it, also in view of the 'Haag Programme', that economic interests and humanitarian commitments stay in a balanced relation.

However, immigration was and is not only a help, but at the same time a social burden if the necessary integration process is not or only partly successful and if the immigrant population is not in a position to unfold its economic and labour potential on the basis of equal opportunities.

This has recently been shown by the 'French fire signal' which caused tremendous excitement in Germany, too. In the background, there are different but partly similar problems in both countries. They show that and how immigration as a part of the solution may evolve into a part of the problem:

The fear of so-called 'French situations' is haunting in European immigration countries, even if the representatives of some other European immigration countries are looking down on the problems in France, pretending superior calmness or meaning to be obliged to teach the French a lesson. In fact, there are no teachers in European integration politics, but only pupils who can learn from each other.

But some facts are clear: In the 1960s and 1970s, social ghettos have been built unintentionally in the suburbs of many large cities in France. Today these high-rise buildings are marked by clear ethno-cultural and religious concentrations: people from the Maghreb, black Africans, predominance of the Islam. Apart from actual or perceived economic social disadvantages there are reports on real or perceived ethnic discrimination. This involves, for example, the perception or fear that an application for a job in the city bearing a *banlieue* address has no chance from the outset. Or the menacing appearance of the police towards those whose skin colours signalise that they have become French, but nevertheless have remained so-called 'visible minorities'. Yet they are French and they claim equal opportunities for participation in economic and social life. In addition to this, there are special problems of the 'second' generation of the *beurs*.

Social and mental problems have become visible here which have to be understood as *European* problems – even though the situations in each European country seem to be different ones. This can, finally, be shown by taking a look on the German example.

In contrast to the situation in France, the immigrant quarters in Germany are structured in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious way, although there are ethno-cultural concentrations of immigrants here, too. Moreover, in spite of many tensions, they have not been built but have grown step by step, one could even say 'organically', by

the moving-in of migrants and the moving-out of Germans in higher social positions, mainly because of the destitute school situation. However, trouble hotspots where ethnic and social problems are mutually intensifying are also growing in German immigrant quarters.

This has not only, but to a certain extent to do with the historical delay of Germany's integration policies based on specific concepts: The German immigration law (of 2005) marked an important step of historical significance – but it came about a quarter century too late.

The core problem in Germany, too, is that the second and third generations of immigrants – in contrast to the pioneer migrants – have sort of zero frustration tolerance to real or perceived economic and social disadvantages. If quick interventions in terms of massive investments in education and training programs fail to come forth, the possibility cannot be excluded that certain social hotspots in Germany will also catch 'French fire' some day.

Summing up: The social costs of unsuccessful or delayed integration are much higher than those of early integration support.

This common European experience shows that integration also is a factor of social expense. This is especially true for those cases where integration could not be managed in a way to be as beneficial as possible for the labour market and as inexpensive as possible for the social systems.

As an immigration continent, however, Europe cannot take leave from the social problems resulting from its immigration history of the second half of the 20th century. And there are political problems resulting from that history, too, because ethno-nationalist or even racist agitators from populist rightwing streams and parties try to make their own profit out of blaming politicians and governments for unsolved problems of integration in Europe. In Germany this is even true for some demographers or semi-demographers who are stressing discourses of cultural pessimism, using the image of a supposedly 'one thousand years old German culture' drowning in the dirty sea of a so-called 'multi-minority society'.

For Europe, however, there is hope that the fulfilment of the 'Haag Programme' with its guidelines for common migration regulation, on the one hand, and minimum options for integration policies, on the other hand, will build a helpful frame to shape new and common politics and policies on migration and integration. Within this frame, immigration that already has taken place may in fact become a minor part of the problem, while future immigration may rather be part of the problems' solution.

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