



Sovereignty fights in Europe and America

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January 19, 2016 10:12 am | *AEIdeas*

When it comes to the issue of sovereignty, it is important to understand a little bit of history.

Take, for example, the current debate in the United Kingdom over whether it should exit the European Union (EU). For many EU proponents, the goal of the EU is to create a *de facto* United States of Europe where laws, regulations, taxes, and foreign policies are unified. The problem is that the UK fought a war only seventy years ago to stop Nazi Germany's aim to unify Europe (albeit under more nefarious circumstances and leadership) and to preserve it and other countries' sovereignty.

Even more recently, the Eastern European countries that fell behind the Iron Curtain only became free from foreign domination twenty-five years ago. Some of them have little interest in replacing Moscow with Brussels. It isn't coincidental that the rise of the EU has coincided with the rise of nationalist groups in many European countries. These groups include the Front National in France, UK Independence Party in the UK, Alternative for Germany in Germany, Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, True Finns in Finland, and Golden Dawn in Italy. Though these groups aren't aligned on many issues, they all unequivocally are euroskeptics.



(http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/RTS7SPT_molenbeek-e1453216177503.jpg)

Residents of the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek take part in a memorial gathering to honour the victims of the recent deadly Paris attacks, in Brussels, Belgium, November 18, 2015. REUTERS/Yves Herman.

Many Europeans feel that their countries are increasingly being ruled by Brussels and the EU's paymaster, Germany. No matter how hard the EU has tried to stamp-out nationalism, people first consider themselves to be German, French, Dutch, or British before they consider themselves to be European. Though government buildings across Europe fly two flags, the people governed by those buildings wear only the colors of their home country.

Ironically, Europe is fighting an issue settled in America in 1787 and reconfirmed in 1865.

With the influx of refugees from the Middle East welcomed by Germany, the EU's Schengen Agreement — permitting the free flow of people among EU members — caused several countries to reinstitute border controls and strengthened the hands of the anti-EU groups across Europe. This mass migration has combined with the growing distrust of the EU to make sovereignty a top issue in Europe. With historic low birth rates and an aging population, some [Europeans fear these immigrants will overwhelm](http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/634693/EU-threat-terrorism-Islamic-State-migrant-crisis-Germany-Angela-Merkel) (<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/634693/EU-threat-terrorism-Islamic-State-migrant-crisis-Germany-Angela-Merkel>) current inhabitants to fundamentally change the character of Europe. The recent [wave of sexual assaults](https://www.aei.org/publication/on-immigration-intolerance-and-the-wests-fundamental-dilemma/) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/on-immigration-intolerance-and-the-wests-fundamental-dilemma/>) is likely just the beginning.

One of the major issues in Europe is its failure to assimilate immigrants over the last fifty years. Many immigrant populations live in densely packed areas ([the banlieues in France](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-other-france) (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-other-france>) or [Molenbeek in Belgium](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/15/molenbeek-the-brussels-borough-in-the-spotlight-after-paris-attacks) (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/15/molenbeek-the-brussels-borough-in-the-spotlight-after-paris-attacks>)) with few opportunities due to Europe's weak job market. [Discrimination against these immigrants](http://www.voanews.com/content/five-european-countries-slammed-for-discrimination-against-muslims--148731215/370078.html) (<http://www.voanews.com/content/five-european-countries-slammed-for-discrimination-against-muslims--148731215/370078.html>) is high. Even the children and grandchildren of immigrants feel disconnected from Europe. I vividly recall talking with seniors at a gymnasium in Germany about their plans after graduation. One-by-one the descendants of Turkish guest workers to Germany said they planned to go "home" to Turkey even though few had ever been to Turkey.

In the US, the sovereignty debate focuses on the locus of power between the federal government and the states (and the People therein). An ever-present theme in the 2016 Republican primary is the importance of getting power outside of Washington, D.C., and back to the states. This sentiment is never uttered by Democratic candidates in its primary, as the Left fundamentally believes in the ability of an expert ruling class of politicians and administrators to govern our lives.

As the federal government's failures increase in the coming years, a greater share of the American people, including those on the Left, will come to see the [importance of having fifty laboratories of competition to experiment and to determine what works](http://www.opportunityohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/OPPOHIO-competitive-federalism.pdf) (<http://www.opportunityohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/OPPOHIO-competitive-federalism.pdf>) and what doesn't. After all, a Democratic governor wants the power to solve her state's problems as much as a Republican governor does.

When it comes to immigration, the sovereignty debate usually surfaces in Southwestern border states that are impacted by the federal government's failure to secure the border and when states and localities pass laws impacting the issue of citizenship. The reality is America has always been a country of immigrants. Though some focus on the small number of Syria refugees coming to America, the larger focus is on the illegal immigrants already here and how to deal with them. One of the arguments made by proponents of strict immigration reforms is that we [undermine our sovereignty](http://heritageaction.com/2013/07/respecting-u-s-sovereignty-and-embracing-legal-immigration-arent-mutually-exclusive/) (<http://heritageaction.com/2013/07/respecting-u-s-sovereignty-and-embracing-legal-immigration-arent-mutually-exclusive/>) when we don't secure our borders and allow mass illegal immigrants to come and stay. Though true to a certain degree, that argument ignores most of our immigration history in which mass waves came through totally porous borders.

Though usually occurring among the fringe, some have argued that the influx of Mexican immigrants to the southwest United States eventually will result in a war with Mexico for the territories it lost (California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico,

Utah, Texas, and part of Colorado). This [conflict is one depicted](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Next_100_Years#US-Mexican_Conflict) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Next_100_Years#US-Mexican_Conflict) in STRATFOR CEO George Friedman's book, [The Next 100 Years](#). It is a farfetched prediction because, unlike in Europe, the [assimilation rate of Hispanic immigrants in America is mirroring](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/01/28/hispanic-immigrants-are-assimilating-just-as-quickly-as-earlier-groups/) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/01/28/hispanic-immigrants-are-assimilating-just-as-quickly-as-earlier-groups/>) past immigrant groups. Moreover, America's Hispanic immigrants are culturally similar to its citizens. Sure, Mexican-Americans may fly the Mexican flag on Cinco de Mayo, but that practice isn't much different than Irish-Americans waving Ireland's flag on St. Patrick's Day.

The key issue for European countries and America is this: will immigrants and their progeny see themselves as citizens of their adopted countries or will they remain loyal to the places from which they came? Our sovereignty is secure when the former occurs, but its long-term viability becomes questionable with the latter. America's immigration fight is really one on how best to absorb those here and improve our ability to effectively manage immigration going forward.

European countries are fighting a two-front sovereignty fight: an external one with the EU and an internal one with culturally dissimilar migrants, with the two fights increasingly interconnected in a potentially toxic brew. Unfortunately for America, that toxic brew could make it [easier for terrorists to attack us given the ease of travel](https://www.aei.org/publication/the-importance-of-fingerprints-to-americas-security/) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/the-importance-of-fingerprints-to-americas-security/>) between Europe and the United States. It is hard to believe that, a hundred years since World War I and seventy years since World War II, we could find ourselves again pulled into continent-wide strife in Europe.

This article was found online at:

<http://www.aei.org/publication/sovereignty-fights-in-europe-and-america/>