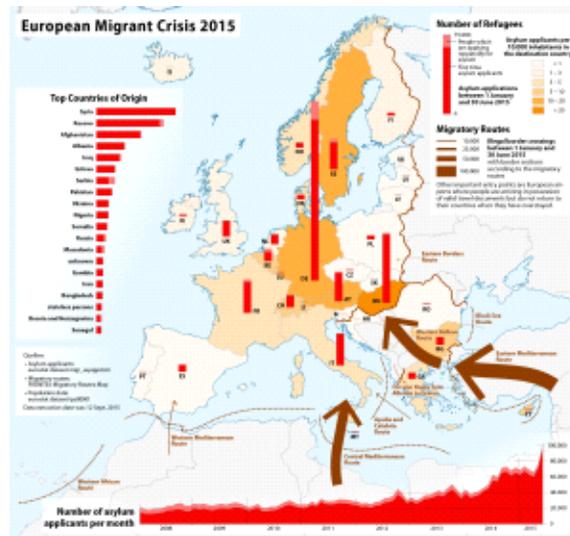


# SIX PROVOCATIONS ON THE MIGRANT CRISIS

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Historians of the future will compare our reactions to the migrant crisis with those of our grandparents to the plight of the Jews in the 1930s. We may not come too well out of the comparison. We need to provoke ourselves in to new thinking, and more important, action. Feuerbach thesis n°11 – the aim of philosophy must be to change the world, not just think about it. Our political elites have already demonstrated their inability to tackle the issues, preferring personal ambition to humanitarian solidarity. But they underestimate the dangers. The very self-interest they pursue may be destroyed by the disparous forces they are letting loose in Europe. Now is the time for a genuine non-governmental digital

diplomacy, capable of moving on the debate and engendering action. Six modest provocations in that direction ...



### **1. The Migration Crisis is an Existential Crisis for the EU**

Political, economic and social fractures existed in the EU long before the migration crisis. The creation of the Euro also created three EU zones with differentiated speeds of integration: the Eurozone, a North-Western zone of Eurosceptics and a poorer Eastern zone. The economic crisis, and in particular the crisis in the Eurozone, accentuated the differences. The migration crisis presses hard into these fractures, further undermining EU solidarity as Schengen provisions are suspended, borders closed and border fences built. The inability of the EU effectively to deal with the crisis has increased the chances of the British voting to leave. Unless the EU countries, collectively and individually, are better able to respond to the crisis, they risk the existence of the EU itself.



### **2. The EU is part of the Middle East (and North Africa and Eurasia)**

EU leaders, and citizens, have thought and acted as if the EU were isolated from the rest of the world. Events in North Africa, the Middle East and Eurasia could be interesting, even slightly frightening, but at the end of the day would not impact on the EU. To use the terminology of Robert Cooper, the EU was safe in its post-modern bubble. In part this reflected attitudes left over from the Cold War, and in part the false sense of security

during the period of US hegemony in the 90s. But both the migration crisis and jihadist terrorism demonstrate the degree of the EU's integration into its neighbourhood. It can no longer hope to shut itself off from the consequences of its policy decisions.



### **3. Europe has Lost the Capacity for Strategic Thinking**

Europe no longer does strategy, or geopolitics. European leaders leap from one issue to another, or from one aspect to another, without seeing the linkages. Without a guiding narrative, too often they are knocked off course by events. Politician's logic ("something must be done, this is something, therefore this must be done") too often substitutes for considered policy making. Tackling the migrant crisis requires a multidimensional approach operating at multiple levels and strategically. This must include tackling the underlying causes (eg civil war in Syria, instability in Libya). European publics will show compassion for a time-limited humanitarian crisis. The compassion quickly wears thin if confronted by the prospect an endless, and growing, stream of migrants over the next decade.



### **4. Talk to the Migrants**

The one voice which is never heard in the debates over the migrant crisis are the migrants themselves. Yet they truly understand why they have left their countries and taken such risks to reach Europe, not to mention what would have persuaded them not to leave and

what would now convince them to return. They must become part of the conversation. This also offers an opportunity for digital diplomacy to prove it extends beyond Ambassadors blogging and first secretaries tweeting. Digital platforms offer the prospect of bringing together migrants already in Europe, migrants waiting in Middle East transit camps and those who have not yet left home in this crucial conversation. The Mont Fleur Scenarios in apartheid South Africa brought together participants from across the political spectrum to generate scenarios for where South Africa might be in 10-15 years. This valuable exercise both helped the participants think about the implications of current policy decisions for the future, but also gave them a common language in which to do so. An online version of the Mont Fleur Scenarios for the migrants could play an equally valuable role in finding solutions to the crisis.



##### **5. “Just Connect” (EM Forster) – Make the Geopolitical Linkages**

The English novelist EM Forster once said “Just connect” – a good lesson for EU leaders. The EU must learn how to make the key geopolitical linkages to resolve the migrant crisis. Iraq and Syria must be seen as one issue, and the defeat of ISIS as central in both countries. In as far as Putin has made himself the “indispensable man” in Syria, the West must deal with him. he alone can deliver Assad for a post-regime change Syria. He is key in delivering Iran. Russia is also willing to deploy the military force in Syria that West is not. But in as far as the West has to deal with Putin over Syria, it will have to deal with him over the Ukraine. Putin sees the linkages, the West does not. The EU must re-engage with Turkey, who will be the great loser in any settlement in Syria and Iraq, but do so seriously. A mixture of bribes and unfulfillable promises will not work. Libya must be re-visited. The UN’s traditional impartiality does not work. The West must decide which side it wants to win (Tobruk government) and ensure that it does.

