

## **Short-sighted politics**

As the weather continues to improve and another summer is almost upon us, the number of migrants dying in the Mediterranean Sea in a desperate attempt to reach the western world is on the rise once more. In just one week alone, reports claim more than a thousand drowned, their lifeless bodies now washing up on the sandy beaches of Libya, Greece and Italy. As this mass influx of migrants into Europe, from Africa and the Middle East in particular, is slowly ebbing into the second year, we can, once again, witness an underlying problem suffocating modern-day politics: the short-sightedness taking hold of decision-making.

Since the flow of migrants reached a dimension that led to overwhelming panic last summer, the countries within the European Union have, partly acting as isolationists, partly as unionists, attempted to find a feasible solution. We have seen an increase in support for nationalist (and some conservative) parties, hoping to use the fear as justification for tighter regulation of borders; moral condemnation by socialists, fighting for an immediate opening of the borders; and, diplomatic appeasement by social democrats and (some other) conservatives, culminating in an abandonment of European principles beyond the geographical border, lending support to regimes in Turkey and Libya who would, under other circumstances, be heavily criticised.

What these varying strategies have in common is a lack of long-term perspective. For without needing to contemplate this issue in any (abstract) depth, there is an astoundingly straightforward logic that can serve as a placeholder for the truth: the influx of migrants will continue. Perhaps we will see a deceleration in the next few weeks, months, or years; but in a globalised world, it is only natural for those living in poverty; or with insufficient educational possibilities; or, as a result of man-made and natural disasters uprooting the delicate foundations on which they had previously lived, to seek a higher quality of life elsewhere. Thus as the cleft between rich and poor continues to increase, not just between the 'first' and 'third' world but also within the wealthy West, a continuation of this process is highly probable. In light of this, despite the potential for short-term alleviation of the problem, the political strategies currently being offered will do little to fundamentally solve the issue at hand.

Arising from this acceptance of migration as the natural, unpreventable (and indeed desirable) order of things is the question of how to find a long-term solution. What this results in, to simplify things a little, are two possible paths. On the one side, we could give in to the simplistic arguments falsely claiming the moral high ground and open all of our borders. Surely, this would result in an influx so rapid, accompanied by a panic so widespread, that the ultimate end would be chaos. For to clarify the following from the outset: Europe cannot take up an unlimited number of migrants. Neither are there unlimited capacities of natural resources and space, to name just two, nor do the required pillars of sustainability, such as doctors, teachers, housing and the like, sufficiently exist thus far. Thus immediately opening our borders, I think it's safe to say, is undesired by all, and so we should reject this option. Which leaves us with the other side: as we are not opening the borders, we must ensure the implementation of control mechanisms, or other changes, with the aim of limiting the number of people desiring to populate a certain place, in this case Europe. Note the alignment with the strategy attempted by several European governments over the last months so far.

Within this latter path of implementing certain control mechanisms, we can again identify two very different options. On the one side, the focus lies on hindering the passage into Europe. This can be done through ‘moderate’ means, as is being done, for example, by the German government: striking a deal with Turkey to ensure one wave of migrants after another is broken before reaching European shores. Or, by symbolically far more drastic methods: building fences around European soil, which is being demanded by all of the nationalist parties. These measures, however, will not work; are not working. No fence, no matter how big, and no law, no matter how unified the majority, can counteract the sheer power of will often exerted by those fleeing from poverty, war, and an overall lack of opportunities. As we have seen over the past year, this solution is not a solution, for as aforementioned, the influx may have been momentarily slowed, but not stopped. These problems should suffice as the grounds for rejection of this option, without having even considered the moral plane on which we are moving: considerations which quickly lead to the conclusion that these measures are not just unfeasible, but also inhumane, if not to say barbaric. Thus let us turn to the other side. It is this aspect which I attempted to portray in an immigration utopia last autumn. The underlying consideration is the following: decreasing incentives within Europe must not mean an absolute decrease; it can also be a relative decrease, in the sense of an increase in the incentives to live elsewhere. The logic is as discussed: we cannot immediately open borders, for the necessary foundations do not yet exist, neither will the resources suffice; nor do we want to hinder the migration of our fellow humans, who have very good reasons for seeking a life in the western world. Put into their position, we would surely all wish to migrate, too. Thus what can we do? It seems the only possibility is to heavily invest (not just monetarily) into the backbones of the ‘third’ world, rebuilding broken systems and developing the underdeveloped. It is often argued that this would transcend the realm of possibility, demanding more than what can be realistically expected of us collectively. But what other option is there? As the argumentation of this essay sought to establish, this solution, the only viable solution of dealing with this issue, also happens to be the morally sound path. Thus to be more concrete: of course it is not possible to expect a dramatic change to occur overnight. Yet big changes must begin with small changes, and small changes must begin with an open discussion. So let us finally discuss this long-term solution of how to expand the borders of the ‘first’ world, thereby decentralising the desired places. If Europe has limits, then the standard of living offered in Europe must be created elsewhere, for only through such drastic measures can the influx be halted; or, indeed, the outflow promoted.

One last consideration: this long-term solution would enable the fulfilment of another moral maxim: as no human is responsible for their place of birth, no human should be made responsible for it, nor should others take credit for it. In other words, the only moral state of things are open borders, which would be the natural evolution of a decentralised ‘first’ world.