



# laetus in praesens

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## Civil Society Coalition for Cultivation of Short-term Bias

### International complicity in avoidance of consideration of long-term human suffering

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#### Introduction

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## Introduction

There is no lack of media coverage of the tragedy of refugees endeavouring to escape their suffering and move to countries where they hope for a higher quality of life. Information is offered on those drowning in their desperate efforts to cross the Mediterranean. The horrendous conditions from which they are fleeing are widely documented, whether it be starvation, illness or violence. Arguments are presented by those who identify with their condition that every effort should be made to receive those fleeing. No arguments to the contrary are considered warranted -- and are typically framed as inherently suspect.

Angela Merkel has offered an open invitation that all people in such conditions are welcome in Europe -- thereby engendering a major popular backlash across Europe, notably a factor in the Brexit tragedy and the fragmentation of European policy on the matter. Politicians opposed to unrestricted migration are framed as lacking any humanity -- in contrast with the short-term perspective of those arguing for such migration. The actions of Donald Trump with regard to those wishing to enter the USA are considered by many to exemplify the inhumane at its worst.

There is a polarization of discourse through which those in favour of migration frame themselves as exemplars of the highest humanitarian values in extreme contrast to those opposed to such migration. Conversely those resistant to ill-considered migration frame themselves as honourably protective of the quality of life of societies and communities, subject to the invasion of people from elsewhere -- enabled by those seeking to impose their own agendas on those communities to whose values they are irresponsibly insensitive. Debate on the matter has become virtually impossible across this divide.

The economist [Paul Collier](#) has argued that: *the debate on migration is polarised into two strident positions, a heartless and the headless* (*On Immigration, Head to Head: Al Jazeera*, 7 August 2015; rerun on *Head to Head*, 18 August 2018). Subsequently he clarifies:

To rise to the challenge, we need to combine the instinctive compassion that mass suffering arouses with the dispassionate analysis necessary to craft an effective response. We need the heart supported by the head. The growing humanitarian crisis has come about because we've deployed one without the other. Our response has veered between the heartless head and the headless heart, and the results have been calamitous. (*Why camps are the wrong way to help today's refugees, The Spectator*, March 2017)

In an extensive review of the book which Collier co-authored (*Refuge: Rethinking Refugee Policy in a Changing World*, 2017), the metaphor is further emphasized (David Jimenez, *How Europe's 'Headless Hearts' Made Refugee Crisis Worse, The American Conservative*, 27 September 2017). The role of migrant rescue vessels, such as [Aquarius](#) and [Sea Watch](#), in the European policy debate on refugees is an exemplification of this. What is framed as righteous humanitarian care beyond question is also readily perceived as humanitarian blackmail (*Systematic Humanitarian Blackmail via Aquarius? Confronting Europe with a Humanitarian Trojan Horse*, 2018). The imagery used to evoke a humanitarian response may well prove counter-productive, evoking "compassion fatigue", "psychic numbing" and donor fatigue (*Starvation Imagery as Humanitarian Trump Card? Counterproductive emotional blackmail engendering worldwide indifference*, 2016).

Whilst debate of any kind on these matters has become impossible, the concern here is to highlight a major factor which is avoided by all in any discussion of the matter, whether within the media or in parliamentary assemblies. In a period when much is made of the consequences of evolution of global warming over the coming decades and to the end of the century -- highlighted by extreme weather

conditions -- virtually **nothing is discussed about the evolution of migration pressure over the decades to come**, let alone to the end of the century. Whereas statistical estimates are available on the former, none are officially available on the latter, as discussed separately (*Anticipating Future Migration into Europe (2018-2050): Beyond the irresponsibility of current political and humanitarian short-termism*, 2017).

Irresponsible short-term thinking is widely deplored in the case of climate change, both in international assemblies and in popular movements, including school children (Richard Fisher, *The Perils of Short-termism: civilisation's greatest threat*, *BBC News*, 10 January 2019). Those righteously arguing for a longer-term perspective and the need for "action now" have little patience with the procrastination so typical of national and international strategies. Most curiously however, **none are seemingly arguing righteously for a longer term perspective on migration**. Rather there is the preference for the righteous argument for action now, namely a short-term perspective -- even down to a focus on days, if not hours, given the tragedy of those at risk of their lives in fragile boats or on long treks through many countries.

In the case of the long term implications of climate change, it is recognized that many lives will be at risk as a result of rising sea levels. In the case of the long term implications of migration, not only will the polarization of the debate lead to further political instability and social unrest, the numbers seeking to migrate will increase far beyond current patterns. They will further exemplify the tragedy of the conditions which they are seeking to flee, the desperate nature of their attempts to reach safe haven, and the numbers dying in the process.

It seems appropriate to endeavour to build up a checklist of those righteously preoccupied with the shortest possible time focus. **Those bodies seemingly seek thereby to avoid any consideration whatsoever of the longer term humanitarian tragedy which this avoidance enables**. In claiming to uphold the highest human values in the present, it might be asked why they fail to address the process whereby the future suffering of untold numbers is enabled by their complicity in a process of deliberate avoidance.

## Checklist of civil society bodies enabling long-term humanitarian suffering?

The methodological question is how to establish which bodies are unquestioning in the pro-migration focus and in the need to address the immediate short-term needs of those in the migration pipeline. The approach with the highest probability of providing an accurate indication of those bodies is to use those listed as having **observer status** with the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#). Missing from this approach is the confirmation that each (including the IOM) has evidenced little concern (if any) with rising population levels over future decades in countries from which migrants are expected to come. The IOM *World Migration Report* (2018) skillfully avoids addressing such matters directly, for example.

The list from the IOM site is as follows

- [Africa Humanitarian Action \(AHA\)](#)
- [Africa Recruit](#)
- [African and Black Diaspora Global Network on HIV and AIDS \(ABDGN\)](#)
- [African Foundation for Development \(AFFORD\)](#)
- [AMEL Association International \(Lebanese Association for Popular Action\)](#)
- [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - Center for International Migration and Integration \(JDC-CIMI\)](#)
- [Amnesty International](#)
- [Assistance pédagogique internationale \(API\)](#)
- [Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office \(ACMRO\)](#)
- [CARAM Asia](#)
- [CARE International](#)
- [Caritas Internationalis](#)
- [Catholic Relief Services \(CRS\)](#)
- [Center for Migration Studies of New York \(CMS\)](#)
- [Child Helpline International \(CHI\)](#)
- [Community of Sant'Egidio](#)
- [Danish Refugee Council \(DRC\)](#)
- [December 18](#)
- [Episcopal Migration Ministries \(EMM\)](#)
- [European Youth Forum \(YFJ\)](#)
- [Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, Inc. \(FECCA\)](#)
- [Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry \(FICCI\)](#)
- [Femmes Africa Solidarité \(FAS\)](#)
- [FOCSIV – Volontari Nel Mondo \(Federation of Christian Organizations for International Volunteer Service\)](#)
- [Food for the Hungry International \(FHI\)](#)
- [Friends World Committee for Consultation \(FWCC\)](#)
- [Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Residing Abroad](#)
- [HIAS, Inc.](#)
- [Human Rights Watch](#)
- [Initiatives of Change International](#)
- [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#)
- [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#)
- [International Catholic Migration Commission \(ICMC\)](#)

- International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
- International Council on Social Welfare (ICWS)
- International Detention Coalition (IDC)
- International Emergency and Development Aid (IEDA)
- International Institute of Humanitarian Law (IIHL)
- International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO)
- International Medical Corps (IMC)
- International Organisation of Employers (IOE)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- International Social Service (ISS)
- International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
- INTERSOS
- Islamic Relief
- Japan International Friendship and Welfare Foundation (JIFF)
- Japan Platform
- Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
- "La Caixa"; Foundation
- Lutheran World Federation
- Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice
- Migrant Help
- Migrants Rights International (MRI)
- NGO Committee on Migration
- Niwano Peace Foundation (NPF)
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- Partage avec les enfants du tiers monde
- Paulino Torras Domènech Foundation
- Qatar Charity
- Refugee Council of Australia (RCA)
- Refugee Education Trust (RET)
- Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (RSC)
- Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF)
- Save the Children
- Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)
- Solidar
- SOS Children's Villages International
- Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF)
- The Hague Institute for Global Justice
- Tolstoy Foundation, Inc.
- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
- United Ukrainian American Relief Committee (UUARC)
- World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (World YMCA)
- World Council of Churches (WCC)
- World Vision International (WVI)
- Zoï Environment Network

How many of the above bodies are genuinely preoccupied with effective strategies to reduce the flow of refugees in the longer term, and therefore should not be included on this list. What other bodies, national, regional or international should be included on such a list? How is an "effective strategy" to be distinguished from unrealistic proposals for which there is no indication of their possible viability?

Complicity with regard to many other issues has become the focus of increasing attention, such as: racism, sexism, anti-semitism, and fascism. Is it now appropriate to recognize the many who are most complicit in short-termism and the avoidance of longer-term implications, whether with respect to migration, climate change, accommodation, impact of artificial intelligence on employment, and the like? **Which bodies are most complicit in avoiding attention to these matters -- thereby rendering them most complicit now in future crimes against humanity?** Who are the "fellow-travellers" with respect to short-termism?

## Reframing the tragic opportunity

Any focus on recognizing collective complicity in short-termism is necessarily too simplistic for the nature of the challenges faced, whether with respect to migration or to climate change. This oversimplistic emphasis is compounded by the process of blame which is then engendered and justified for those who engage in it. The frustration of the times is characterized by blame-gaming, finger-pointing and scapegoating. This extends to demonisation -- to the point of seeing "evil" in those who fail to agree with an advocated strategy and to act on it (*Collective Mea Culpa? You Must be Joking ! Them is to blame, Not us !* 2015).

Some clarification of the "spaces" by which such discourse is characterized is evident from the following -- which calls for much further refinement, as would be the case in any more systemic analysis.

	<b>Historical past suffering</b> (exploitation / colonialism / slavery)	<b>Immediate present suffering</b> (exploitation / neo-colonialism / neo-slavery)	<b>Longer-term future suffering</b> (exploitation / "colonialism" / "slavery")
Recognition	ignorance / forgetfulness	ignorance	ignorance
Concern	indifference / "not my problem"	indifference / "not my problem"	indifference / "not my problem"
Sense of complicity	acknowledged	acknowledged	acknowledged
Preoccupation	inactive compassion / powerlessness	inactive compassion / powerlessness	inactive compassion / powerlessness
Token response	commemoration	token measures ("in God's hands")	anticipatory planning ("in God's hands")
Action focus	reparations	<b>urgency of action now</b> on symptoms	focus on <b>addressing root causes</b> now
Judgement of failure	resentment / injustice	blame those failing to address symptoms	blame those failing to address root cause

With respect to both climate change and migration, the first two shaded rows reflect the most common condition of indifference -- except when confronted by the realities of the situation. The unshaded three rows are indicative of degrees of sensitivity which engender a variety of responses readily deprecated as "token" (and designed primarily for purposes of public relations). It is the last two shaded rows which call for far greater clarity. Those listed above are clearly (and rightly) concerned with the **"urgency of action now"** -- on the tragic symptoms so widely reported.

The question is who is focused on **"addressing root causes now"** -- and how is that process framed? Failure to do so can then be understood as enabling future manifestation of the problem to a far more intense degree -- with all that implies for a much higher level of suffering. Especially problematic are the formulation of ill-considered arguments regarding the immediate benefits of migration now -- in the absence of any consideration whatsoever of the future period during which such arguments may become extremely dubious, if not dangerous, as illustrated by the presentation of [Jonathan Portes](#) (*Tragedy is inevitable if we fear migration rather than celebrate its benefits*, *The Guardian*, 30 June 2019). Noteworthy in any focus on "benefits" is the complete absence of reference to security issues in communities already faced with neighbourhood violence.

In the case of climate change, efforts to recognize and address root causes are highly controversial, given their implications for lifestyle and quality of life. In the case of migration, the recognition of root causes is even more controversial. Beyond being difficult to discuss, given the tendency to blame-gaming and denial, the difficulty in both cases is that strategies to address symptoms only alienate those concerned with further and more intense manifestations of the problem. Their concern is then readily framed as "heartless", just as that with knee-jerk "action now" at all costs may be understood as "headless".

## Deprecated considerations with respect to long-term climate change and migration issues

Neglected arguments with respect to the implication of increasing population levels are variously developed in the following (with extensive references):

- *Local Reality of Overcrowding -- Global Unreality of Overpopulation* (2019)
- *Institutionalizing global myopia in anticipation of excessive population growth* (2018)
- *Blinkered objectives of the Global Compact for Migration* (2019)
- *Systemic negligence regarding population, migration and sustainability* (2019)
- *Migration as a temporal dilemma of ethics exemplified by the "trolley problem"?* (2019)
- *Crimes against future generations* (2019)
- *Prohibition of Reference to Overpopulation of the Planet: draft proposal* (2018)
- *Big Lie of the Anthropocene: underpopulation or overpopulation?* (2018)
- *Migration and other distractants enabling future human sacrifice?* (2018)
- *Consequences of human overpopulation?* (2018)
- *Short-term humanitarian blackmail ignoring long-term human sacrifice* (2018)
- *Prohibition of Reference to Overcrowding: draft proposal* (2019)
- *Anticipating Future Migration into Europe (2018-2050)* (2017)
- *Overpopulation -- never?* (2017)
- *Enabling Fruitful Multiplication of Global Population* (2015)
- *Potential supporters and endorsement of population multiplication* (2015)
- *12 Strategic Questions for Europe Regarding Forced Immigration from Africa* (2015)
- *Papal Concern for Climate Change and Refugee Care* (2015)
- *Issuance of Vatican Passports to Trans-Mediterranean Immigrants* (2015)
- *Is There Never Enough? Religious doublespeak on population and poverty* (2013)
- *Denial of "overpopulation" as a problematic factor* (2013)
- *Overpopulation denial as promoted by religions and fellow-travellers* (2013)
- *Blame-gaming: always someone else's responsibility* (2013)
- *Towards a realistic simulation of faith-based population policies* (2013)
- *Scientific Gerrymandering of Boundaries of Overpopulation Debate* (2012)
- *United Nations Overpopulation Denial Conference* (2009)

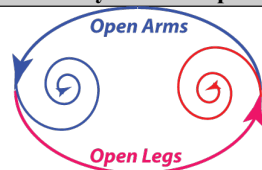
- *Overpopulation denial: failure to consider progressive implications of overpopulation* (2009)
- *Climate change and overpopulation as cultural challenges of reflexivity* (2009)
- *Overpopulation Debate as a Psychosocial Hazard* (2009)
- *Psychoactive drugs: relevance to handling overpopulation debate* (2009)
- *Overpopulation as a key missing factor in climate change discourse* (2009)
- *Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth* (2008)
- *Climate Change and the Elephant in the Living Room* (2008)
- *Overpopulation shunning mindset: the most dangerous form of hope-mongering?* (2008)
- *Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems: the unexamined role of Abrahamic faiths in sustaining unrestrained population growth* (2007)
- *Misleading focus on proximate causes* (2007)
- *Assessment of faith-based death warrants effectively authorized* (2007)
- *Begetting: challenges and responsibilities of overpopulation* (2007)
- *Irresponsible avoidance of the overpopulation challenge* (2007)
- *Problems arising more or less directly from overpopulation* (2007)
- *Assessing the responsibility of religions for suffering and death* (2007)
- *Reframing my "overpopulation" problem* (2002)
- *Reframing the problem of "overpopulation"* (1995)

### Funding for short-term suffering versus Funding for long-term suffering?

Curious indifference to millions scheduled to suffer in the future as a consequence

*More than €1m raised for rescue ship captain detained in Italy* (*The Guardian*, 2 July 2019)  
*Fund-raising appeals for Sea-Watch captain Carola Rackete top 1.3 million euros* (*InfoMigrants*, 2 July 2019)  
*Five EU states to take in Open Arms migrants, ending standoff* (*Reuters*, 21 August 2019)  
*Stranded migrant rescue ship Open Arms refuses to leave Italian waters* (*France24*, 20 August 2019)  
 NGO - Help us to keep going! - Open Arms

### Systemic complementarity of Open Arms and Open Legs?



Wikimedia category: *Wide open arms and legs*

*Del Europa Open Arms al Europeas Open Legs* (*El Cadenazo*)  
 1,187 lyrics, 15 artists, and 100 albums matching open legs (*Lyrics*)  
 Felix Fernandez de Castro, *Open Arms and Open Legs* (*de nautinas navalinas, faenas varias y variadas*). (*La Paseata*, 21 January 2019)  
*Having "open arms" is very very different from having "open legs"*. (*Reddit*, 2018)  
*Body Language of Leg Spreading* (*Nonverbal Body Language Dictionary*)



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