

Europe Incapacitated



Mohammed Mogouchkov,

by Theodore Dalrymple

Is Europe capable of defending itself against serious external or internal threat?

It must be doubtful, in large part because Europe doubts whether it has a right to do so. It once believed that it had a *mission civilisatrice* (a civilising mission); now it seems bent on a *mission autodestructrice* (a mission of self-destruction).

The disaster of the two world wars and the re-evaluation of colonial history have sapped Europe's belief in its right to exist—or at any rate the belief of a large part of its political class and intelligentsia. Their doubts may be largely exhibitionist in nature, atonement for the sins of one's ancestors has become a visible sign of virtue; but even insincere political declarations have their practical consequences. You cannot simultaneously claim that your past

is nothing but a history of violent exploitation, *and* defend your civilisation against threat. You have to believe that there is something worth defending.

European countries have huge state apparatuses, but a bloated state is not the same thing as a strong state, any more than a swollen leg is a strong leg. The murder by two Islamist terrorists of a teacher in Arras, in northern France and of two Swedish tourists in Brussels, illustrates the defencelessness of Europe against internal threat.

In the French case, a 20-year-old terrorist named Mohammed Mogouchkov, a migrant from Ingushetia (near Chechnya), attacked the school in which he had been a pupil, stabbing a teacher, Dominique Bernard, to death, and injuring another in the face.

He was known to the security services, who had him under surveillance. If nothing else, this shows the limits of the efficacy of such surveillance. Mogouchkov had long expressed his hatred of France. Audio files found on his phone [revealed](#) his "hatred of France, the French, democracy and the education he had received in France." He said, "You have pushed me towards Hell."

Mogouchkov's family—his mother, father, and their four children—arrived in France in 2008. The father was refused refugee status when Mohammed was six. Five years later, the father's final request for resident status was turned down. In February 2014, the family was taken to the airport for expulsion. At the last minute, however, the order for their expulsion was rescinded. An association for the support of illegal immigrants agitated for the annulment; the then minister of the interior withdrew the order, according to the rules that he himself had made. His advisers pointed out that "the family, present in France for more than five years, with children being schooled, fulfilled the criteria laid down in a circular by the Minister of the Interior concerning [the

retention of] undocumented immigrants and the expulsion of children.”

Later, Mogouchkov, according to other rules, could not be expelled because he had reached the age of majority, having grown up in France. There were exceptions in cases where there was “conduct of a nature to threaten the fundamental interests of the state, or linked to activities of a terrorist nature,” but Mogouchkov was not thought dangerous enough to be expelled.

Mogouchkov’s father was known to be an Islamist; his elder brother, Movsar, was and remains in prison, sentenced to five years for the diffusion of propaganda on behalf of ISIS. Since 2020, Mohammed was known to the security services as having been “radicalised.” His younger brother is now also in custody because it is alleged that he knew of Mohammed’s plan to kill and informed no one of it.

Contempt and frustration are not guides to wise policy. On the contrary, they are likely to lead before long to a cure that is worse than the disease.

There are two further problems faced by the French state. The first is that it now has nowhere to expel Mogouchkov to, since Ingushetia is in Russia. The second is that European human rights law forbids the expulsion of anybody whose life is at risk in the country to which he is expelled, *irrespective of his conduct in the country that has given him shelter*. The current French minister of the interior has said that France would take no notice of the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in this case, but this is pure demagoguery, politicking of the most dishonest kind. Mogouchkov isn’t going anywhere except a French prison. If his life expectancy is normal, and he is kept in prison for the rest of his life, he will cost the French taxpayer at least \$3,000,000, probably much more.

In Brussels, a 45-year-old Tunisian shot to death two Swedish tourists who were in Brussels to watch a football match between Sweden and Belgium. He too acted in the name of ISIS, wanting to kill Swedes because the Koran had been burnt there several times. He was on the run for 12 hours before being found and shot dead by the police; in the meantime, 35,000 people were confined to the stadium.

The man, who was known to have been a serious criminal in Tunisia, was in the country illegally and was under orders to leave. No attempt to expel him had been made since 2020, however. He was known to the police because he was suspected of human trafficking and being a danger to the state. Last year, the Tunisians actually asked for him to be extradited from Belgium so that he could continue his sentence in the prison from which he had absconded, but the Belgian authorities did nothing to comply with it. The security services were due to assess his case the day following his killing of the two Swedes.

What conclusion can the European citizen draw from these cases? He cannot comfort himself that the problem is French or Belgian alone, that everywhere else is vastly more efficient in these matters. What happened in France and Belgium could have happened anywhere.

The French state accounted for about 58 percent of the French GDP last year. It can hardly claim to lack resources, France, after all, has one of the largest economies in the world. And yet it proved itself unable to deal with a single Ingushetian family, which had long been known to be hostile to everything French, not merely in theory, but in practice. The state had made rules to hamstring itself—rules that, of course, increased bureaucratic and legal procedures at the expense of the taxpayer. What is the citizen to think?

Belgium is similar. The state accounts for 55 percent of the GDP, yet it could not find and expel one single Tunisian

criminal known to be a danger to it.

Is it any wonder that frustrated contempt for the state and those who control it is growing? But this is dangerous, for contempt and frustration are not guides to wise policy. On the contrary, they are likely to lead before long to a cure that is worse than the disease.

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