Pegida & Co.

The rise and fall of a populist enterprise[1]

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- Pegida gives voice to a widespread mood that has so far been expressed primarily in representative surveys and scientific studies, but rarely in a distinctive protest movement. As such, the media interest in Pegida went hand in hand with the reactions of established politicians, who either strongly rejected and distanced themselves from Pegida or attempted to address the legitimate concerns and needs of the "man on the street" through paternalistic dialogue.

- It is not the size of the Pegida protests that is concerning, but powerful undercurrents that have existed for decades, regardless of the specific topics and public protests of the day. These undercurrents can be split into three categories: relative deprivation, a sense of disorientation and resistance to others.

After appearing as if out of thin air in Dresden on 13 October 2014, the protest movement Pegida (a German acronym which translates as Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West) soon spread to several other cities in Germany and abroad, growing larger by the week and sparking an overwhelming amount of media interest. Its twelfth Monday rally on 12 January 2015 drew a record number of protesters, which overly generous police estimates put at 25,000.

From this point on, things went downhill and Pegida began to fall apart. This was seen in the rapid decline in attendance at rallies, in the row between organisers in Dresden and those of Pegida offshoot demonstrations elsewhere about the right strategy and permission to use the name Pegida, and, ultimately, in the internal rift within the organising team in Dresden. This dispute led to the departure of five of the movement's leading members and to the establishment of rival organisation "Direct Democracy for Europe" (DDfE). There is much to suggest that Pegida & Co. may soon disappear from the political market. Much ado about nothing, then? On the contrary, while they are most likely a flash in the pan, Pegida & Co. are still attracting attention in the political arena and from analysts.

In the first part of this article, I will examine in more detail Pegida's public image, including its carefully calculated ambiguity tactics. In the second part, I will focus on the public reaction to Pegida, and in the third part I will explore the undercurrents from which the movement draws. Finally, I will address the question of what our response should be.

In empirical terms, this article offers little that is new. Instead, I seek to bring together in one place the information available on Pegida and offer a preliminary assessment of the phenomenon. I am doing so primarily as a researcher who has observed developments, spent decades examining political protests and social movements in Germany and abroad, and initiated a study on Pegida.

1. THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF PEGIDA & CO.

Pegida's public image, that is, Pegida as it appears at surface level, is well documented, with an abundance of quotes, media reports and comments available to those wishing to gain an impression of the organisation. Additionally, there have been four surveys of Pegida supporters to date. However, these surveys only involved a small and, most likely, non-representative sample. As such, they cannot provide a picture of the typical Pegida supporter, despite a number of claims to the contrary. Analyses have also been carried out of Pegida's Facebook friends; the organisation was found to have just under 160,000 likes on 20 February 2015. It is abundantly clear from these analyses that Pegida cannot be considered a movement of harmless everyday citi-

zens. The overall picture is fuzzy and somewhat inconsistent, with right-wing populist, xenophobic and, in some cases, racist elements increasingly coming to the fore, despite a more moderate tone being struck in places, most notably in the 19-point programme. Point 1 states: "PEGIDA is FOR the admission of war refugees and those persecuted on political or religious grounds. This is our human duty!"

However, little is known about the inner workings of Pegida. The first insight was gleaned from a Facebook communication from Lutz Bachmann, the initiator of Pegida and, to date, its key figure. Pegida was set up as an association in Dresden on 14 November 2014 and legally registered in the city on 19 December of that year. The twelve founding members have since functioned, largely anonymously, as the "organising team". Lutz Bachmann was elected chair, René Jahn vice-chair and Kathrin Oertel treasurer. The team was later silently reduced to ten members. Apart from Bachmann and Oertel, who has also acted as media spokesperson since December 2014 despite an initial reluctance to give interviews, the members of the organisation team stayed entirely in the background. To this day, we remain in the dark about the responsibilities and decision-making processes within Pegida, and about how the three publications on the organisation's positions/demands came into existence and who authored them.

We also know little about the profiles and stances of most of the protesters. Much of the discourse so far has been speculative or based on dubious generalisations of public statements from Pegida's ranks or of the results from the four surveys published to date.

Pegida & Co. make public appearances, invite people to join them on their "evening strolls" and at their rallies, give speeches to their supporters and say a jovial "Hello" to the people of Dresden (to hearty applause), Germany (to hearty applause) and Europe (to highly subdued applause), clearly seeking greater visibility and media coverage. At the same time, the Pegida organisers are known for rejecting the mainstream media, branding them all the "Lying press" (*Lügenpresse* is a slogan that was seen in the Nazi marches of the Weimar era), for initially refusing all requests for interviews, and for also calling on those joining their "evening strolls" to avoid contact with media representatives. It is precisely this ostentatious rejection of the media that has massively fuelled media interest and motivated journalists and academics to show as much of Pegida as possible, research the biographies of its organisers, and present a whole range of material to the general public, including unedited photo galleries and entire speeches. As a result, it has been possible to get to know this movement, which presents itself as a sort of giant organism, and some of the faces behind it (most notably Lutz Bachmann, who initiated Pegida, and Kathrin Oertel, who later became its media spokes-

person) in much greater depth than other protest movements of a similar size.

Pegida's appearances were characterised on the one hand by a combination of unprofessionalism and improvisation, due in part to circumstances, and on the other by careful management, orchestration and overt showmanship. Protest rallies were almost always announced online only. The events began in the early evening, going on into the autumnal and winter darkness. Logistical support was modest, with a relatively small loudspeaker van serving as a stage for the speakers. A number of them embodied the local spirit of the movement, coming across as ordinary individuals and using plain and sometimes clumsy language as they attempted to convey their key messages. At the same time, their speeches were littered with allusions and ambivalence, leaving their audiences thinking what they dared not say out loud. Once in a while, guest speakers made an appearance, seeking to engage with issues beyond those discussed at the pub by quoting intellectual sources such as Henryk Broder, or being hailed as bridge-builders in the process of creating a national German, supposedly even European, movement. One such notable appearance was that of Dutch Islam critic Geert Wilders, whose message of greeting to his "dear friends in Dresden" on 25 January 2015 began as follows:

> "What is happening here in Dresden is truly marvellous. Dresden is showing people how to do things properly! The whole of Europe is looking to you. You are not alone; you are part of something huge -

> in Germany, the Netherlands and right across Europe. You are fulfilling the hopes of many. You are the voice of the people against the elite. You are the people!"

The public reaction to various different speeches included applause, booing, contemptuous laugher (for example, when a speaker referred to "the SPD General Secretary with the unpronounceable name") and repeated chants of "We are the people" (this slogan has been adopted from protesters in the historic "Monday demonstrations" against the East German government in the run-up to the fall of the Berlin Wall) and "Lying press". Sometimes, these chants erupted spontaneously, interrupting or accompanying the speeches, while at other times they arose in response to an intentional pause for effect following a pithy statement.

After the speeches at the opening event (which is usually held on a large green open space close to the city centre), a protest march is conducted along a route which is not normally announced before the event, presumably due to concerns over counter-demonstrations. The following announcement was made to marchers: "We ask you to follow the leading police vehicle and follow the instructions of police officers." The lead marchers carried a banner with the slogan "Non-violent and united against religious wars on German soil!" They were closely followed by the "official" and "hard-core" members of Pegida, consisting of groups of mostly middle-aged men who dressed and behaved in a manner typical of "right-wingers", football

fans, hooligans or macho-men. In the middle and, in particular, towards the back of the march, the picture was somewhat more varied, with women, older couples and individuals who were more "bourgeois" in appearance. Sometimes, the marchers carried torches. Bystanders and, more especially, members of the media were at times ignored, at times given looks of suspicion and on occasions addressed with aggressive remarks and gestures. Sometimes, protesters covered the lenses of cameras and video-recording devices or pushed to one side microphones that were pointed their way.

One could not help but notice the large number of stewards (of whom a small number were women), identified by their armbands, who mingled among the protesters during the rally speeches and lined both sides of the march. It was also possible to pick out stewards with no visible identification who were communicating with each other.

The march, which started and ended in the same place at most events, was usually followed by a closing demonstration with more speeches, after which the gathered protesters set off home.

Those attending the rallies resembled a relatively tightly packed collective body, both at the rallies and on the march, something which came across to our numerous observers as a sign of calm and discipline, but also of a threat. There were hardly any relaxed groups or areas of transition between demonstrators and inquisitive observers. Any individuals wandering around the edge of the march were repeatedly urged by stewards to join the ranks of the marchers.

This largely uniform image of the Monday evening strolls was maintained up until 12 January, the day of the most well-attended march in Dresden. The movement had been attracting more supporters on a weekly basis. One of the speakers on this evening counted a total of 31 "current" offshoot rallies in 31 German cities or regions, and announced that more groups would be formed. There were also media reports of Pegida initiatives abroad, with stories emerging around mid-February 2015 of efforts to organise Pegida offshoot rallies or public events in Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom. However, so far the protests have only been small in scale. For example, just 30 or so people attended the first Pegida rally in the Swedish city of Malmö on 9 February. They were confronted with a counter-protest comprising some 4,000 individuals under the banner "No Pegida Sweden" (newspaper *die tageszeitung*, 11.02.2015, p. 10).

As the number of Pegida protests grew, so did the number of counter-rallies, with a significant difference emerging between eastern and western Germany. Around mid-January 2015, almost every observer, and most likely the organisers in Dresden, expected to see a further increase in the number of protests by Pegida & Co., while barely anyone considered

the movement to have already reached its climax or even started to dwindle.

Things happened very fast in the following days and weeks. Kathrin Oertel, who had already been appointed as Pegida's press spokesperson, appeared on Günther Jauch's talk show on 18 January, breaking with the movement's policy of refusing to engage with the media. The Pegida rally scheduled for the following day was called off by the authorities "for security reasons". These reasons had to do with the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo and an unspecified threat to the life of Lutz Bachmann. The Pegida rally initially set to take place on Monday 26 January was brought forward at the last minute to Sunday afternoon to avoid it clashing with the politically-focused music event announced by a broad counter-alliance and set to feature famous artists. With some 22,000 attendees (police figures), this vibrant event drew a larger crowd than the Pegida demonstration with its 17,300 participants (police figures). It was as if a spell had been broken. With the exception of Leipzig, Pegida was unable to gain anything resembling a foothold, and counter-demonstrations were emerging even in places where no Pegida offshoot rallies had been announced, let alone taken place.

Even during this phase, conflict had arisen between the organisers in Dresden and those in other locations. This was particularly true with Legida in Leipzig, where proceedings were more strongly influenced by right-wing extremist individuals and groups than in Dres-

den. One of the results of these differences was Bachmann's helpless attempts to have potential Pegida offshoot events certified by his parent organisation in Dresden and thereby brought into line. Ideological differences also emerged between offshoot protests themselves, for example between Dügida (Düsseldorf) and Duigida (Duisburg).

On 27 and 28 January, the already simmering conflict within the Dresden organising team was made public. The problems were due not least to the dubious character of Lutz Bachmann and revelations about his activities. With details of Bachmann's substantial criminal career having already been published weeks before, a photo of Bachmann sporting a Hitler moustache and disdainful, xenophobic comments he had made on Facebook now caused an uproar and led to an investigation being opened into alleged hate speech by Bachmann, an investigation that is still ongoing. These events had already forced Bachmann to step down from his chairmanship of Pegida's organising team on 21 January, but had not brought calm to the situation, especially given that Bachmann still appeared to be holding on to his leadership ambitions behind the scenes. On 25 January, Frank Ingo Friedemann resigned his membership of the Pegida board, followed two days later by Achim Exner, René Jahn, Bernd-Volker Lincke, Kathrin Oertel and Thomas Tallacker. Jahn, until then vice-chair of the organisation, gave an interview to *Bild* newspaper on 28 January in which he said: "I don't want anything to do with this

Nazi business or the right-wing extremist statements." There were now just five board members left – Bachmann, his wife, Tom Balazs, Stephan Baumann and Siegfried Däbritz. The next Monday protest, scheduled for 2 February, was cancelled due to a "disagreement". There was now the question of whether there would be two competing protests on the Monday after that.

The defectors had announced on 2 February that they were founding their organisation "Direct Democracy for Europe". This new group, which is positioning itself "to the right of the CDU", considers itself to be conservative and focused on citizens' issues. Its primary aim is to increase civic involvement and achieve more direct democracy. Its first public protest event was held on Sunday 8 February, drawing 500 people to Dresden's Neumarkt district. The centrepiece of the event was a 17-minute scripted speech read dryly by figurehead Kathrin Oertel. While Islamisation would not be playing a role in DDfE, Oertel stressed that DDfE was "not a counter-protest to Pegida" and that it shared the same aims as Pegida, even if its ways and means of achieving them were different.

The following day saw the next in the series of Monday protest rallies staged by the remaining Pegida organisers, but this time involving just 2,000 or so people (the authorities had been told to expect 5,000). Lutz Bachmann, who had been demoted to the secondary ranks before the organising team split, now appeared as the first and main

speaker and reinforced his previous line. He claimed that his xenophobic remarks ("trash", "scumbags" and "cattle"), which are being discussed online, had been quoted out of context. And anyway, according to Bachmann, these were words that he was sure "every single one of us has used down the pub at some point". Tatjana Festerling, who had previously served as a politician in the "Action for Germany" (AfD) party and sympathised with the "Hooligans against Salafists" movement in Cologne, bemoaned in her Dresden speech the public's "paranoia about Nazis".

A course has now been set for the foreseeable future. Once seemingly united, the two wings of the Pegida movement are now hopelessly estranged and have become separate organisations.

The "hard core" of explicitly xenophobic, right-wing extremist and racist supporters will attempt to hold their line while at the same time trying to promote the protest throughout the rest of Germany. While this endeavour will continue for a time, with very different constellations in different regions, it is unlikely to secure mass support. It is interesting to note that the organisers, having so far unquestioningly accepted the figures of the police force they so highly esteem, are increasingly producing their own, vastly exaggerated figures. According to the police, the "15th Monday evening stroll" attracted 4,300 protesters, yet Bachmann puts the figure at 10,300.

The "soft core", i.e. those who identify as moderate, citizen-focused, right-wing populist

and pro-democracy, are also running out of ideas when it comes to their programme and organisation. This is because calls for "more democracy" have for decades been the bread and butter of left-wing and alternative left-wing groups, yet these groups have a well-educated, activist and infrastructurally solid base that will not associate with those of a right-wing populist persuasion. Consequently, it is likely that some of the currently turbulent waters of right-wing populism will be diverted to the political waterwheel of the AfD but will fail to create any significant extra-parliamentary driving force. The end is nigh for Pegida & Co., though not for the undercurrents from which they draw (see part 3).

2. THE PUBLIC REACTION

Given the rather modest strength of the Pegida movement as a whole (the chain-of-light (*Lichterketten*) protests against right-wing extremist and xenophobic ambitions in late 1992/early 1993 saw hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets in some cities), it is remarkable that Pegida attracted such a tremendous amount of media attention in Germany and abroad and that it drew comment from so many established political leaders. This means that the extraordinary public response received by Pegida & Co. cannot be explained by the size of the protests. Rather, it is attributable to three situations.

Firstly, Pegida gives voice to a widespread mood that has so far been expressed primarily in representative surveys and scientific studies, but rarely in a distinctive protest movement. Pegida supporters are sometimes referred to as "angry citizens", a derogatory term originally used in a strange joint reference to those protesting against the Stuttgart 21 station construction project and to the aggressive proponents of Thilo Sarrazin's ideas. It is a fitting description in as much Pegida has succeeded, at least for a time, in turning a hazy mood into a collectively represented, vocal and articulate protest. Indeed, the protesters went with their gut feeling on many occasions and expressed a great deal of anger. Where opponents of the Stuttgart 21 project put forward technical and factual arguments, Pegida instead resorted to cryptic insinuation.

Secondly, media coverage of Pegida served, largely unintentionally, to raise the organisation's profile, thereby boosting self-confidence among organisers and supporters alike, and attracting new adherents. The initial refusal of the movement's organisers to speak to the media served to fuel media interest, stoking the ambitions of both sensationalist and investigative journalists. In just a short space of time, Pegida became a recognised political brand throughout Germany. Günther Jauch's political talk show was unable to convince a single member of the organising team to come on the programme for the discussion entitled "Frustrated citizens and xenophobes –

just how dangerous are the new street protests?" which aired on 15 December 2014. Shortly afterwards, the movement committed its first "sin" by appointing Kathrin Oertel as its press spokesperson. This was followed by Oertel's appearance on Günter Jauch's talkshow on 18 January 2015 (attracting some five million viewers) and a highly controversial press conference at Saxony's Center for Political Education on 19 January 2015. The press conference was also attended by Lutz Bachmann, who wore a jacket for the first time, demonstrating his "civil" credentials.

As such, the media interest in Pegida went hand in hand with the reactions of established politicians, who either strongly rejected and distanced themselves from Pegida or attempted to address the legitimate concerns and needs of the "man on the street" through paternalistic dialogue. When did a relatively small protest movement ever make its way into the German Chancellor's New Year's speech. When did the leader of a major party last feel obliged to make an ostentatious, extra-electoral appearance in a personal capacity at an event to listen to the concerns of those who, while not wishing to identify with out-and-out right-wing extremists and xenophobes, stand in front of, next to and behind their banners sporting slogans such as "Islam = Cancer" and applaud speakers who describe the Islamisation of the West not as an imminent threat, but as a full-blown reality? As proof, these speakers pointed among other things to the violation of German cemetery regulations which require the dead to be buried in coffins (rather than wrapped in cloth as is customary in the Muslim world). Another reason that the established political parties are at fever pitch is that Pegida and Co. are promoting the AfD as an electoral contender, which could lead to a shift in the balance of power and market share along the political party spectrum. Added to this is the concern regarding "reactions abroad", which are particularly negative with a view to right-wing extremist tendencies in Germany. As such, some Pegida supporters, particularly the political novices among them, considered themselves to be at the epicentre of German politics.

Finally, the numerous counter-protests have served, most certainly unintentionally on the part of their participants, to boost the status of Pegida, thereby attracting even more attention from the media and established political parties. The latest attendance figures for the protests and counter-protests were keenly followed, proportional statistics calculated (which often worked to Pegida's disadvantage), and the east-west differential highlighted and its causes pondered. It should be noted that, while Pegida & Co. made some notable gains in the former East Germany, its opponents far outnumbered its supporters in the former West Germany. According to media reports, 66,150 people attended anti-Pegida protests in 13 western German cities on 12 January 2015, with just 1,780 individuals attending Pegida's protests. The proportions

were similar in Berlin. Even in the east of the country, the counter-protests reached a considerable size for a time. Almost 30,000 Pegida supporters and just short of 43,000 anti-Pegida protesters were counted in six eastern German cities on 12 January.

On an overall level, the activities of Pegida & Co. have highlighted two politically opposite trends. With reference to the first trend, it became clear that there is potential within the German population, though by no means only here, for xenophobic, right-wing populist and right-wing extremist ideas to gain currency and, in certain contexts, to be exploited by political entrepreneurs to stage self-confident public events. However, given the great variation in the size and dynamics of these public events, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the extent of this potential. Certainly, it is possible that, under particular circumstances, such as the appearance of a charismatic leader, the emergence of politically conducive opportunity structures, or the unfolding and escalation of chance events, a far larger proportion of this dormant potential could be activated. It could then move beyond disciplined rallies and spill over into uninhibited, aggressive and violent action, as happened in Rostock's Lichtenhagen district in August 1992 or as seen with the recent riots in Cologne by the "Hooligans against Salafists" in October 2014. According to provisional police figures, the number of attacks on and cases of trespassing at refugee accommodation totalled 150 in 2014, with a particular increase

noted in the last three months of the year, during the period of the Pegida movement's ascendency. 50 per cent of incidents that year occurred in this quarter.

The second trend saw loose networks of counter-protesters coming onto the scene to oppose Pegida & Co. These protesters took a stand on the streets and in other public spaces and, in some cases, even organised specific initiatives to support migrants and, in particular, asylum seekers.

3. UNDERCURRENTS

My assertion is that it is not the size of the Pegida protests that is concerning; after all, they are rather modest in scale on the whole. Rather, there are two other aspects that are troubling. The first involves the widely visible surface-level phenomenon in which the movement's supporters confidently and brazenly present themselves as the voice of the people ("We are the people") and reclaim values such as home (the sign "One people, one home, one nation"), tradition ("The Ore Mountains, a land of tradition"), Christianity ("Dresden Christians greet Pegida") and identity ("It should become normal to identify with your own country, culture and identity, and no-one should ever turn this into something to be ashamed of"). At the same time, the political landscape, "the system" as a whole, is being described among other things as inept, autistic, blinded to reality, untruthful and cor-

rupt (placards reading "GERMANY = DICTA-TORSHIP"; "Dismantle the EU dictatorship"). The second troubling aspect is of far greater significance and concerns latent, but powerful undercurrents that have existed for decades, regardless of the specific topics and public protests of the day. These undercurrents are likely to remain for a long time to come, with some of them carrying the potential for reactivation. These undercurrents can be split into three categories:

Relative deprivation

Many people feel that their economic and social status is under threat. They are concerned about their jobs, about being able to afford rent payments, about having a comfortable pension and about their children's future, all of which creates a climate of uncertainty. At the same time, there is growing unhappiness and outrage about the fact that the rich and privileged are using both legal and illegal means to obtain additional benefits at the expense of all other social classes. The German economy may be doing relatively well on the whole compared with other Western countries, but people's fears of a deterioration in their own personal situation and their perception of growing social inequality that has nothing to do with performance and of overall inequality in the distribution of wealth within society are creating currents that are driving Pegida, as well as left-wing and radical left-wing movements.

A sense of disorientation

People are seeing a disintegrating social order, a pluralism of competing values, a shift in familiar political coordinates, accelerating cultural transformation characterised by globalisation and migration, and a lack of transparency in international economic and political processes. All of this leads them to look for fixed points of reference offering them clarity, stability and support. Certain political entrepreneurs, ranging from populist agitators to Nazis and conspiracy theorists, are responding to this need. Using the "populist moment", they offer the simple explanations that people are looking for, identify the guilty parties and propose straightforward, "common-sense" solutions that leave no room for grey areas, ambivalence or compromise. This leads to a deep mistrust of and, ultimately, overt contempt for any powers that represent ambiguity, differentiation, careful consideration or complexity, in other words, the political, economic and intellectual elite, who, supposedly or actually, look down on common people and elevate their own competence, knowledge, skills, and insights into complex relationships and the logic of circumstantial constraints. As a result, politicians, bankers, experts and even journalists become figures of scorn. "We are the people" goes the defiant chant, which, given Pegida's base in eastern Germany, is designed to evoke parallels between the political elite of the former East Germany and the "political class" of today's Germany.

Crudely contrasting "those of us down here" with "them up there" is the key tactic of any populist movement. Paradoxically, this can go hand in hand with the uncritical acceptance of leaders, who, even if only in a rhetorical sense, have to present themselves as genuine champions of the will of the people.

Resistance to others

The juxtaposition of one's own community with that of the "other" is similarly stark to that of the people and the ruling class. A person considers their own situation to be familiar and normal, while that of the other person appears sinister. While individuals are vaguely aware of their own shortcomings and inconsistencies, they suppress this awareness, disassociating themselves from the embarrassment of their own dark side and projecting it onto the other person. The fewer opportunities there are for individuals to question and change their preconceived ideas of the differences between them and the foreigner through everyday interaction (for example, when buying from the Turkish baker or chatting to the Lebanese mother who collects her daughter from nursery each day), the more convinced he or she will be of these negative images, leading to the syndrome of "group-focused enmity". This also explains why fears of Islamisation seem to be especially pronounced in the very regions in which only a tiny number of Muslims live.

The elements that constitute self and other vary greatly from case to case. Self is thought of in terms of home, tradition, down-to-earthness, people, Germany, Europe and the West; the other may be identified as a pest, a Jew, a foreigner, a migrant, an asylum-seeker, an Oriental, an Arab or a Negro. Pegida's focus on the threat posed to the West by Islamisation, inherent in its name, can be expanded to include any given issue. This is seen not least in the way that it protests just as vehemently against the "Lying press", and foreign "economic migrants" and "benefit scroungers". Accordingly, one of the placards being carried on 12 January read: "Economic migrants and traitors get out of Germany". Being able to categorically identify a scapegoat feels like a relief. It removes the potential embarrassment of looking at the facts and discovering grey areas and inconsistencies, or even developing a sense of empathy.

Occasionally, people express their rejection of foreigners in blunt terms. There are some Pegida supporters who will share on camera their thoughts about what epidemics might spread to Germany with the arrival of asylum-seekers and their belief that the "Negroes from down there" are too stupid to even hammer in a nail and that German children are at risk of being kidnapped by asylum-seekers. However, more often that not, they are more guarded in their comments, though it is not always clear whether they are really demonstrating an ability to differentiate or whether they are simply attempting to appear

socially respectable. They draw a clear distinction between the "real" asylum-seekers who should be welcomed into the country and the "fake" economic migrants who should be turned away. In the hope of being given the benefit of the doubt, they frequently preface their statements with the remark that they have nothing at all against asylum-seekers and foreigners before introducing a "but", which signals the start of their real message, and claiming that foreigners have a greater propensity towards crime and that Muslims are fundamentally incapable of integrating into Western society. This is illustrated by the following statements from our survey:

> "I'm especially against the increase in the number of Muslim immigrants. This religion is totally incapable of integrating. It's a menace to the human race and especially to women, and it belongs in the dark ages, not the Europe we live in today."

> "Islam has no place in Germany. I've got nothing against war refugees, but I am against economic migrants and people who don't want to integrate in this country. In some cities, you feel like a foreigner in your own country. This can't be allowed. Crime is increasing and politicians are standing idly by. I've had enough !!!! I don't want a situation like in Berlin Mohabit (sic!), Cologne Kalk or Essen. That's why I'm coming out onto the street - to keep this madness away from Dresden."

Pegida draws on each of the three aforementioned undercurrents. They give it a broad and sense of association and identification as a self-styled group seeking to break free of its victimhood and develop the capacity to act in

line with the motto: "There are many of us. We're getting larger all the time. And we'll show you". This creed, which became self-intoxicating for a while (on sign read "The system has failed – we are the turnaround", another "All the wheels stand still when WE, the strong, want them to!") as a result of disproportionate media coverage of the protests, could not be sustained in the end. It failed due to revelations about right-wing extremist comments and the activities of some Pegida proponents, ideological differences and vain personal ambitions, a schizophrenic approach to the media, waning public interest and individual motivation in the face of the same old messages being repeated, and, not least, the growing counter-movement.

However, just because things have calmed down on the surface, it does not mean that the undercurrents that have existed for decades have lost their force. Given a new set of structures and current events, they could re-surface in a far more vehement form than that of Pegida, triggering social and political tremors.

4. WHAT SHOULD OUR RESPONSE BE?

In the end, we are left with a question that is as difficult to answer as it is pertinent, that is, the question of what our response should be. There has been a great deal of public comment and debate on this matter, with two

main options being put forward: "distance ourselves from Pegida and make a point of refusing to speak to them" or "prioritise dialogue with the ordinary citizens among the protesters who are open to it". Each position was endorsed by an extraordinarily long list of politicians and commentators, showing above all just how redundant, one-sided and superficial these perspectives are. A better approach would be to combine the two options, engaging in dialogue with those open to it while ostracising dyed-in-the-wool antagonists. But even this approach is superficial in that it is an ad hoc strategy focusing on the symptoms while failing to address the causes of the problem. Below are four suggestions for a more effective approach:

1. A helpful initial response is to take a close look at the facts and analyse the phenomenon of Pegida & Co. in empirical terms with the aim of understanding its origins, appeal and dynamics and, as already mentioned, its undercurrents. This kind of attempt to understand is sometimes misinterpreted as an act of endorsement and prematurely rejected. Such rejection is then expressed in empirically baseless accusations (for example, referring to Pegida as "Nazis in pinstripe") or in blanket statements branding all Pegida supporters as "brown vermin" etc. While labelling people in this way indicates the political position of the

observer, it brings little light to the discussion.

2. The second response is about actively engaging with the views and assertions of Pegida & Co. This involves (a) rejecting false assertions, (b) calling for them to be more precise in their demands, (c) identifying social prejudices all the way through to out-and-out racism, (d) holding counter-protests, and (e) initiating criminal proceedings against offences such as hate speech. Responding in this way will draw greater attention to (latent) differences within the Pegida movement and at the same time draw clear lines between the movement and its critics and opponents. As a result, people will recognise that Pegida's self-styling as the voice of the people is empty rhetoric.

3. The third response involves relevant groups within the political sphere and within society admitting that they have made mistakes. These mistakes include:

   • allowing and, in some cases, actively encouraging a growing social division within society,

   • mainly encouraging political participation in areas where it is limited to political symbolism or a mere sideshow.

   • playing down right-wing extremist and xenophobic trends,

- perpetuating the illusion that these trends are only to be found to the right of the "mainstream middle class",
- long denying that Germany is an immigration country,
- some political parties and authorities capitulating to xenophobic trends or avoiding impending conflict (by setting up refugee accommodation on the outskirts of towns and cities or in industrial areas),
- failing to disclose and confidently justify the real costs of our asylum policy,
- confusing integration with assimilation and introducing a range of conditions and measures that hinder rather than help the former,
- welcoming, legitimising and channelling immigration based primarily on its economic benefits,
- wrongly giving the impression that Germany is bearing the bulk of the "burden" when it comes to admitting asylum-seekers and refugees,
- the European Union doing more to keep refugees out than to help to improve the situation in their countries of origin.

4. With these groups having admitted to past and ongoing mistakes and failings, the fourth response is to implement the necessary measures, especially *structural* measures, to counteract and remedy these errors. It would be naive at this point to rely solely on the ability of the established political actors to identify and correct their own mistakes. Fundamental changes in political strategy are achieved as a result of highly diverse interest groups joining forces, competing and fighting. These groups will all differ in their ability to organise themselves and engage effectively with conflict. Those wanting change must exert influence on the existing balance of power. The actors battling it out for this influence at political level represent one of three forms of contemporary democracy, as described by Helmut Dubiel. In my opinion, only the third of the following concepts is desirable:

The *liberal* form of democracy seeks to largely close off the political system to the masses "due to a fundamental scepticism of humankind or a mistrust of the masses". In so doing, they are preparing the ground for a move towards what Colin Crouch calls "post-democracy". This refers to the subtle advance of de-democratisation, with the remaining democratic institutions becoming mere empty shells. In this context, Crouch refers to a breakdown in political communication, growing social inequality (with corresponding inequality in political participation) and a neo-liberal economic policy in which companies and industry associations increasingly determine government action.

The liberal form of democracy is contrasted with two competing concepts of "more democracy". The first is of the (right-wing) *populist* variety. It is based on an acclamatory form of direct democracy in which the authentic, identitarian, undistorted will of the people, perhaps embodied by a strong leader, is enforced. It involves "a strategy of political mobilisation that instrumentalises people's experiences of offence rooted in their ethno-centric, chauvinistic and authoritarian attitudes" and must therefore be considered *reactionary* or *regressive*. Pegida and the "Direct Democracy for Europe" alliance that split off from it have both made this type of democracy their own.

The other version of "more democracy" recognises the divergence and inconsistency within society as a whole without following a form of naive pluralism that claims that every interest within society will find a form of representation in accordance with its relevance and legitimacy. This version, which Dubiel calls *democratically progressive*, is a solution "in which those leading the political decision-making-process not only act as a state authority towards society, but also create opportunities for egalitarian discourse on non-strategic matters."

We will come closer to the final concept of democracy as the many different powers that have a sense of duty to promote the ideals of enlightenment and the concept of participatory politics work together to a greater extent. These include left-wing and liberal left-wing parties, trade unions, civil-society institutions and groups who take the standard definition of "civil" and "the sovereignty of the people" seriously, engage in social and political processes on that basis and put pressure on political decision-makers. The strong anti-Pegida movements give cause for hope. However, they will not be enough if they simply adopt a reactionary approach to surface-level phenomena such as Pegida & Co. and then fade away again as these phenomena disappear.

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