**James Traub "On Immigrants and Refugees," June 6, 2017.** *Traub is a contributing editor at* Foreign Policy *magazine. The following excerpt has been modified for the classroom.*

**Does Immigration Challenge National Sovereignty?**

"...Let me try to describe what I think is not so much a crisis, as a sequences of crises, because we're not in the same one now that we were in in the summer of 2015.

The first crisis, chronologically but also in terms of moral importance, was the terrible humanitarian crisis of a million people desperately fleeing warfare—from [Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War" \t "_blank), from [Iraq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraqi_Civil_War_%282014%E2%80%93present%29" \t "_blank), and later from [Afghanistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_%282015%E2%80%93present%29" \t "_blank) and elsewhere. But because they all fled at once, or at least very quickly, in a way that was unprecedented, and therefore essentially surpassed all of the legal and physical barriers that normally are meant to control immigration refugees, they presented themselves almost [all] at once on the borders of Europe and at the borders of European countries.

That created a second crisis, which I think of as a **crisis of sovereignty**. People throughout Europe—yes, chiefly people whose orientation maybe was more nationalistic, but not only—had a deep fear of their countries' borders, their sovereignty, being violated.

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...We are [also now] in an **assimilation crisis**...Europe is now seeking to integrate...an enormous number of people who are, by and large, Muslim in a place that is, of course, chiefly Christian; [Muslims] who are pious in a place that is chiefly secular; and who, on average, are poorly educated in a place where the economy depends increasingly on higher education and high skills.

Sweden opened itself up to political refugees from all sorts of totalitarian societies, whether they were from Chile; whether they were from Iran; in the 1990s they accepted lots of Bosnians, lots of Kurds. Some of these people were Muslims; some were not. In general, they integrated very well into Swedish society. These were largely middle class, well-educated people. People who are fleeing political repression are very often people who are political activists and therefore well-educated, professional people. Sweden felt justly proud of the fact that "my pediatrician is a Bosnian; my neighbor is a Kurd."

Then they began taking refugees from places which were just more impoverished and people were less educated—Eritreans and Somalis. Now it becomes more complicated.

There are very large numbers of unaccompanied Afghan minors—almost all boys, virtually 100 percent boys—and these are kids who have a fourth- or fifth-grade education. How are they going to fit in? What is their attitude toward women going to be? Are they going to engage in sexual mistreatment? Do they have any clue about Swedish morals, about how the sexes behave to each other? These are real profound worries which will be working themselves out for well or ill over the coming years in Sweden."