

Chapter Two

Racism in Europe: A Challenge for Democracy?

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Democracy is a form of government, not a steambath of popular feelings.

—Ralf Dahrendorf¹

The Anti-Racist Founding Myth of Europe and the Perseverance of Racism

In recent decades the Shoah has become a central reference point for a common European identity. Especially in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, the heritage of the Nazi past and the involvement of many European countries in the exploitation and extermination of Jews gained a special role in the public discourse of the newly unified Europe.² The commemoration of the Shoah is not only a source of symbolic legitimacy, but it also suggests a commitment to political values such as the rejection of racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia³. In 2007, denial of the Shoah became a punishable crime across the European Union.⁴ However, despite the relevance of this founding myth it would be misleading to believe that it implies a clear cut rupture with Europe's racist past, and the end of exclusionary practices.

On the contrary, several factors indicate that racism continues to be a feature of contemporary Europe. For instance, in a publication released by the civil society organization European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in 2015, it was revealed that in 2013 alone there were 47,210 racist crimes reported across the European Union. The organization stressed that this is only the tip of the iceberg as many crimes go unre-

1. Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy," *Political Studies*, vol. XLVII, (1999), pp. 2-16.

2. Lothar Probst, "Founding Myths in Europe and the Role of the Holocaust," *New German Critique* Vol. 90, 2003, pp. 45-58.

3. *Ibid.*, 53.

4. Claus Leggewie, "A Tour of the Battleground: The Seven Circles of Pan-European Memory," *Social Research*, Vol. 75, No. 1, (Spring 2008), pp. 217-234.

ported.⁵ Because of the ongoing economic recession in Europe, the report assumes that these figures will continue to rise in subsequent years.

Given these alarming developments, this chapter will take a closer look at two interrelated manifestations of racism in the current European context: the rise of Islamophobia, and the growth of populist right wing parties and right wing social movements across Europe.

It demonstrates that new cultural forms of racism are omnipresent in Europe, and that we witness nowadays an “entitlement racism,”⁶ in which racism has been newly established as a legitimate way in which to express negative sentiments about Europe’s “others.” The chapter eventually concludes that rather than being an anomaly of liberal democracy, racism is an expression of the paradoxes inherent in democracy.

Before we discuss these two interrelated expressions of contemporary racism in Europe in more depth, it is useful to provide a definition of racism and to explain why the existence of racism is usually perceived as incompatible with liberal democracy.

Racism—a Tool of Social Inequality and Exclusion

Racism has been often understood as an ideology that ascribes inferiority to persons with distinct biological features such as skin color. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are different variants of racism. One major feature of racist ideology is its flexibility and adaptability, i.e. its ability to reinvent itself.⁷ This inherent feature makes it more accurate to speak of racisms plural rather than racism. Phenotypical biological features such as skin color are only one type of marker used in racist ideology. Further markers, which operate in a very similar way to skin color, are employed in processes of racialization. Hence, many scholars have tended to include in theories of racism cate-

5. Felicity Capon, New report exposes huge increase in racist crimes in Europe, 2015, <http://europe.newsweek.com/new-report-exposes-huge-rise-racist-crime-europe-326929> (accessed 25/8/2015)

6. Philomena Essed, “Entitlement Racism. License to Humiliate,” 2013, http://www.antigone.gr/files/en/library/selected-publications-on-migration-and-asylum/eu/SymposiumReport_LR%20final.pdf#page=44 (accessed 25/8/2015).

7. Etienne Balibar, “Is there a neo-racism,” in Immanuel Wallerstein and Etienne Balibar, *Race, Nation and Class* (New York and London: Ambiguous identities Verso, 1991), pp. 37-67.

gories such as culture, ethnicity and religion in addition to biological features. As Reisigl and Wodak⁸ have pointed out, even the classical pseudoscientific racisms of the 19th and 20th centuries included a reference to cultural or national character. The Nazi anti-Semitic racist ideology is a case in point. Most prominently Adolf Hitler emphasized that the true danger posed by the Jew is rooted in his spirit/culture rather than any biological “racial” trait:

We speak of the Jewish race only as a linguistic convenience, for in the true sense of the word, and from a genetic standpoint, there is no Jewish race.... The Jewish race is above all a community of the spirit.... A spiritual race is tougher and more enduring than a natural race. The Jew wherever he goes remains a Jew ... and to us he must appear as a sad evidence for the superiority of spirit over flesh. ⁹

The increasing use of culture as a surrogate for race has led scholars of racism to the conclusion that we are witnessing the emergence of a new racism, or neo-racism. The use of the term neo-racism is based on the misleading idea that there is actually something new about this mode of racism. Yet despite the fact that there is relatively little new about the “new racism,” the increasing reference to culture in contemporary racist discourses poses a considerable challenge to anti-racist struggles, namely the denial of racism. By avoiding the word race and related signifiers such as color, forms of racism that refer to culture claim to be non-racist. Therefore, as Grofoguél¹⁰ poignantly point out, if racialized subjects “experience higher unemployment rates, higher poverty rates, higher dropout rates, lower quality of education in public schools, lower salaries for the same jobs [...] or are placed in the “dirty jobs of the labor market” it is because they are “unassimilated” and have an “un-adapted/inadequate culture,” and not because they are racially oppressed and marginalized.

8. Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism: European Perspectives,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 28 (1999), pp. 175-199.

9. Gunnar Heinsohn, “Hitler’s motive for the Holocaust,” in Wolfgang Bialas and Lothar Fritze, eds., *Nazi Ideology and Ethics*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 103-126, p. 113

10. Ramon Grosfoguel and Laura Oso and Anastasia Christou, “Racism, Intersectionality and Migration Studies: Framing Some Theoretical Reflections,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. Online September 2015.

It is vital therefore to acknowledge the omission or the plain denial of racism in many contemporary debates as a particular challenge for anti-racist struggles. On the other hand, it is useful to look at the inherent continuities of racism across time and space, such as the process of naturalization.

Naturalization is the process that renders categories such as ethnicity and culture into effective instruments of racism. It is the depiction of differences as natural and fixed¹¹, as exemplified by the above-cited statement by Hitler (“the Jew always remains the Jew”), or by contemporary discourses that portray immigrants as unable to integrate into Western societies because of their cultural differences. These allegedly natural, static features are then assumed to determine the behavior of those people to whom these differences are ascribed; and these differences are evaluated negatively.

A related immanent feature of racism is its group-constructing mechanism. Racism is always exercised by groups, or by individuals that conceive of themselves as a member of a group, and is targeted at other groups or individuals as members of groups. The seminal work on “the established and the outsiders” by the sociologists Elias and Scotson, and their concept of “pars pro toto” distortion, have provided an important insight into these group dynamics that play out during processes of racialization.¹² As they have observed, a more powerful, established group (in the case of racism, the racializing group) tends to attribute to the entire outsider group (the racialized group) the “bad” characteristics of that group’s worst section, the “anomic minority.” In contrast, the self-image of the established group is modelled on its exemplary, most nomic, or norm-setting section, i.e. the minority of its best members. The figure of the “illiberal Muslim terrorist” versus the “liberal non-Muslim law-abiding citizen” is an illustrative example of such a pars pro toto distortion. In sum, racist ideology de-individualizes people. The individual only exists as a member of a group, and alleged deficiencies don’t have to be identified individually but are instead automatically attributed to the individual qua being identified as a member of the particular group. The underlying function of these processes is to exclude

11. Robert Miles, *Racism*, (London: Routledge, 1989).

12. Norbert Elias and John Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders: A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems* (London: SAGE, 1994).

the racialized other from material and immaterial resources and/or to legitimize their exclusion.¹³

In order to fully grasp the phenomenon of racism, however, we must recognize that it includes several dimensions, of which ideology is only one. As Essed¹⁴ has noted, racism is an ideology, a structure and a practice (or process as she calls it). It is an ideology that hierarchizes groups and puts them in opposition to each other. At the same time it is also a structure of rule, law and regulations that establishes unequal access to rights, entitlements and resources. Essed, moreover, highlights that racism is also a practice, since “structures and ideologies do not exist outside the everyday practices through which they are created and confirmed.”¹⁵ Racism hence classifies and performs acts of boundary-making through its ideological component; it excludes through structures, and it (re-)activates these excluding structures and ideas (ideologies) through everyday practices. In the interplay of these three components, racism becomes a powerful system of creating, maintaining, and legitimizing social inequality.

Racism and Liberal Democracy

The issue of racism has been largely under-theorized in academic scholarship on democratic theory. This fact seems surprising at first; however, this scholarly omission is embedded in democratic ideas. Democratic theorists are guided by a disregard for difference and the liberal conviction that democracy is primarily a matter of assuring an equal right to vote and to majority rule, as Gould¹⁶ has rightly emphasized. In dominant democratic theoretical accounts the promotion of justice and equality consequently requires non-discrimination, i.e., the employment of the same principles to all persons regardless of their particular social position or backgrounds.¹⁷ The equality principle

13. Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*. (London: Sage, 1991). Stuart Hall, Rassismus als ideologischer Diskurs,“ in *Das Argument 178*, (Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 1989), pp. 913-921

14. Essed, *op.cit.*, p.

15. Essed, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

16. Carol Gould, “Racism and Democracy Reconsidered,” *Social identities* Vol. 6, No. 4, (2000) pp. 425-439.

17. Iris Marion Young, “Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference,” Paper for the AHRC Centre for Law Gender and Sexuality. *Intersectionality Workshop 21/22 May 2005*, Keele University, UK.

enshrined in liberalism has thus demanded that gender, racial, sexual and other differences are disregarded rather than taken as a starting point for discussion and deliberation in democratic societies. Even more striking is the fact that not only has most democratic theory little to say about racism, but many democracies have actually coexisted in practice with racism for centuries.¹⁸

Only relatively recently have activists and scholars of democracy developed approaches that take into account the need to address the inequalities, including racial inequalities, that are preserved in many liberal democracies. They have pointed out that the difference-blind equality principle enshrined in liberal democratic ideas is actually part of the reason why inequalities continue to exist. Defining equality as equal treatment, they have emphasized, blends out differences in “social position, division of labor, socialized capacities, normalized standards and ways of living” to the detriment of members of historically excluded groups.¹⁹ Scholars such as Iris Marion Young have consequently proposed a “politics of difference,” which endorses the idea that substantial equality will be produced not necessarily by treating everyone in the same way, but instead by implementing measures such as compensation.

Without going into more detail regarding this immensely rich and important strand of scholarship, it is important to note that this approach has challenged the underlying biased equality paradigm of liberal democracies, and in relation to racism has stressed that where racialized structural inequality influences so many institutions and potentially stigmatizes and impoverishes so many people, a society that aims to redress such injustice must notice the processes of racial differentiation before it can correct them.²⁰

These accounts have made it clear that racism is a challenge to democracy because it hampers participation, which in turn is a basic condition of democracy. Participation however, is not understood here as mere voting rights or formal institutional equal access to the democratic process. The crucial point is that, in order to be able to fully participate, one has to be free from any form of domination. Finally, it is also important to note that different axes of inequality, such as race, class and gender, intersect with each other, and hamper full participa-

18. Gould, *op. cit.*, p. 426.

19. Young, *op. cit.*

20. Young, *op. cit.*

tion in the democratic processes in complex ways. Hence, it is rarely racism as an isolated phenomenon and form of exclusion that comes into play, but the interaction of different forms of domination, that jointly construct a system of social inequality. In sum, racism indeed poses a severe challenge to liberal democracies, but in much more complex ways than classical liberal democratic theories would suggest.

Europe and its Different Internal Others

In the following sections two manifestations of racism in Europe are discussed: the success of the “New Right” and the interrelated emergence of Islamophobia. It has to be emphasized though that racism in Europe is certainly not directed solely towards Muslim communities. Roma communities in particular are continuously racialized and consequently marginalized in Europe.²¹ Another highly relevant manifestation of racism is targeted at international immigrants and refugees in general. Thousands of refugees have died in the Mediterranean in recent years; the figure for 2015 alone (as of mid-September 2015) was 2900 people.²² The influx of refugees and migrants is often accompanied by dehumanizing discourses about them from political elites, as well as from the public in general. In spring 2015, for example, the British newspaper “The Sun” published a piece by the columnist Kathie Hopkins, who compared immigrants to cockroaches:

No, I don't care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don't care [...] Make no mistake, these migrants are like cockroaches. They might look a bit 'Bob Geldof's Ethiopia circa 1984,' but they are built to survive a nuclear bomb. They are survivors.²³

21. Liz Fekete, “Europe against the Roma,” *Race & Class*, Vol. 55, No. 3, (January/ March 2014), pp. 60-70.

22. IOM (2015): Missing migrants project. <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/> (number retrieved 9/25/2015)

23. UN human rights chief denounces Sun over Katie Hopkins “cockroach” column. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/apr/24/katie-hopkins-cockroach-migrants-denounced-united-nations-human-rights-commissioner>, April 25 2015

The column was published just hours before a fishing boat packed with migrants capsized off the coast of Libya, with the loss of 800 lives.²⁴

Meanwhile, as this chapter is being written, pictures of the maltreatment and mass detention of refugees at the EU's eastern border circulate in Europe on a daily basis. This maltreatment, particularly by the Hungarian government, is considered so severe that it has evoked analogies to Nazi deportations during the Holocaust in public debates.²⁵ The statements of government leaders such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán have made explicit the link between the dehumanization of these people and their racialization:

Those arriving have been raised in another religion, and represent a radically different culture. [...] There is no alternative, and we have no option but to defend our borders.²⁶

These incidents represent only the most visible of the dehumanizing discourses and practices against Europe's "others." Many other processes of "othering" are more subtle, and require a careful, case-by-case analysis to determine whether processes of racialization are at stake or not. However, while contextual analyses are undoubtedly necessary, it is important to acknowledge that racism certainly plays a role in contemporary European migration politics. As the scholars Wieworka²⁷ and Balibar²⁸ remind us, the increasing use of culture in racist ideology is directly linked to the transformation of Europe from a colonizing continent to an immigrant-receiving continent. Whereas more classical forms of biological racism during colonial times were designed to subordinate the "other," in times of increasing migration (partly a direct consequence of decolonization) to Europe, cultural forms of racism increasingly function to deny people access and belonging in the first place.²⁹

24. Ibid.

25. Austria's Faymann likens Orban's refugee policies to Nazi deportations. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/13/us-europe-migrants-idUSKCN0RC0GL20150913>

26. Migration crisis: Hungary PM says Europe in grip of madness. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/03/migration-crisis-hungary-pm-victor-orban-europe-response-madness>, September 3 2015.

27. Michel Wieworka, Racism in Europe Today. *European Sociologist* (Newsletter for the European Sociological Association) Vol. 35, (2013), pp. 3-5.

28. Balibar, *op. cit.*, p.

29. Ibid., p.

Right Wing Extremism in the New Europe

As we have indicated above, immigration and immigrants have become one of the most politicized issues in Europe today. The question of immigration has moved in most liberal democracies “from the dark corridors of parliament committees to the often populist and emotionally charged public sphere.”³⁰ As a consequence, the politicization of immigration has led to significant electoral gains for populist right-wing forces (or even right-wing extremist parties) in many European states. The Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Swiss People’s Party (SVP) are paradigmatic instances of this evolution, but these cases are no exception. For example, only a few years ago academic articles were published on the puzzling question: “Why is there no extreme right party in Greece?”³¹ In 2015, the extreme right-wing party Golden Dawn holds 17 seats (seven percent) in the Hellenic parliament. Minkenberg³² reminds us though that the analysis of right-wing extremism should not focus exclusively on those groups represented in parliaments. He distinguishes three types of groups. The first is office-seeking groups, which organize themselves in political parties. Second are groups that mobilize within social movements. The third type comprises groups that are best described as sub-cultures, which operate relatively independently from political parties and larger social movements, do not exhibit formal organizational structures, and may have a particular propensity for violence. All three types are an increasingly relevant phenomenon in contemporary Europe.

What is alarming about these developments is not the mere existence of these parties and movements, but their (electoral) popularity and their simultaneous integration into the political establishment. Much of this shift from “pariah” to mainstream and the accompanying electoral success is a consequence of the radical transformation of right-wing parties and movements in Europe. The “new modernized right” is often characterized by a toned down anti-democratic rhetoric, including a sig-

30. Andrej Zaslove, “The Politics of Immigration: a new electoral dilemma for the right and the left?” *Review of European and Russian Affairs* vol. 2, no. 3, 2006, p. 15.

31. Vassilis Lambropoulos, “Why is There no Extreme Right in Greece?” *The Journal of the International Institute* vol. 10, no. 1, (Fall 2002). <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=jii;view=text;rgn=main;idno=4750978.0010.106.>, p. 15.

32. Michael Minkenberg, “The European Radical Right and Xenophobia in West and East: Trends Patterns and Challenges,” in Ralf Melzer and Sebastian Serafin, eds., *Right Wing Extremism in Europe: Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies, and Labor-Market Oriented Exit Strategies* (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013).

nificant reduction of its previous anti-Semitic shibboleths, and a generic willingness to behave in a way compliant with basic principles of liberal democracy. Instead of using overt forms of biological racism and anti-Semitism, the new right emphasizes the incompatibilities of different cultures in order to legitimize its opposition to international immigration and ethno-cultural diversity.

A paradigmatic example is the Austrian Freedom Party. In the 2013 general election, the FPÖ gained 20.5 per cent of the votes, making it one of the most successful right-wing parties in the European Union. In recent decades it has transformed itself, from a fringe party, which relied heavily on references to the national-socialist past and was based upon a German nationalist ideology, into a successful right populist party. The party even entered national government at the beginning of the 2000s. During its time in office in the 2000s it was significantly weakened, but has revived under its new leader Heinz Christian Strache. While the move from fringe to mainstream was often faltering under the previous leadership of Jörg Haider, who still used blatantly anti-Semitic rhetoric and regularly deployed codes such as “East Coast” (referring to the American Jewish population) to criticize his political competitors, the party’s current discourse is much changed. This does not imply that anti-Semitic attitudes and ideology no longer exist within the party, but they are clearly less relevant to the party’s electoral strategy.

Instead, from the mid-2000s Islam became one of the most salient issues in the political mobilization of the party. Strache used the issues of Islam and Muslim immigration as a means of sharpening the profile of the FPÖ against its political competitors on the right.³³ The FPÖ’s strengthened anti-Islamic agenda also matched the increasingly Islamophobic tendencies within the Austrian population. In the European Value Survey of 1999, 15 per cent of correspondents said that they did not want to live next to a Muslim. In the 2000s, this number more than doubled: in 2008, 31 per cent of respondents stated that they did not want to have a Muslim neighbors.³⁴

33. The party split in 2005 into The Alliance for the Future of Austria led (until his death) by Haider, and the Freedom Party led by Strache. Leila Hadj-Abdou and Sieglinde Rosenberger, “Islam at Issue: Anti-Islamic Mobilization of the Extreme Right in Austria,” in Brian Jenkins, Emmanuel Godin, and Andrea Mammone, eds., *Varieties of Right-Wing Extremism in Contemporary Europe*, (Routledge: London, 2013), pp. 149-163.

34. Christian Friesl, Regina Polak, and Ursula Hamachers-Zuba, *Die Österreicherinnen. Wertewandel 1990-2008*, (Vienna: Czernin, 2009), p. 265.

The anti-Islamic agenda of the Strache-FPÖ is based on two main arguments. The first is that fundamentalist Islam poses a threat to national security. The second argument is that Islam is an inherently alien culture, which threatens the cultural identity of the Austrian nation state. The concept of cultural identity as used in the party's discourse remains rather vague. However, it is evident that in the rhetoric of the FPÖ, Islam is constructed as a monolithic entity that promotes a culture that is irreconcilable with that of Western societies. In line with this position, in the mid-2000s the party even launched an association named SOS-Occident ('SOS-Abendland') to save "Western cultures and customs."

The party's solution to these supposed cultural and security threats is to restrict immigration. Islam is used in the party's rhetoric as a simple synonym for unwanted immigration and immigrants. Hence, from the mid-2000s onwards, the term "Muslim" has to some extent replaced the term "immigrant" in the party's rhetoric. It serves as a means to divide those who are supposedly Europeans, and hence can be part of the Austrian nation, from those who are not and cannot.

Similar developments are at play in other Western European right-wing populist parties. The result has been increased transnational cooperation of the populist right, and the use by these parties of very similar concepts and ideas. As Wodak³⁵ have highlighted, Islamophobia is at the core of a transnational project to unite the European populist right under one common banner: the defense of Europe's heritage and its Western and liberal democratic values against the "third invasion of Islam in Europe," as the party leader of the Belgian Vlaams Belang has tellingly paraphrased it.

New forms of mobilization that rely strongly on an anti-Islamic rhetoric have also been at the core of new right social movements, such as the PEGIDA ('Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident') in Germany, or the English Defence League. Goodwin³⁶ has pointed out that it would be wrong to assume that their supporters are giving up on mainstream democracy; such movements are nevertheless an important symbol of the overall decline of public trust in politics.

35. Ruth Wodak, Majid Koshraivnik, and Brigitte Mral, *Right Wing Populism in Europe. Politics and Discourse*, (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 74.

36. Matthew Goodwin, *The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence League and the Counter-Jihad Challenge. Chatham House Briefing Paper*, March 2013.

People who affiliate with these movements are “more dissatisfied with politics, more distrustful of institutions and more likely to think that the political system has serious faults that need addressing.”³⁷ PEGIDA’s slogan, “The system is finished—we are the change,” is emblematic. Right-wing street protesters don’t simply understand themselves as victims of a wrong politics, but of a failed system.³⁸ However, as noted above, this is a general development: it is merely more pronounced among members of these movements. In the broader population, large majorities are similarly distrustful of politicians and institutions.³⁹

What is particular and new about these movements, though, is their denial of racism or the refraining from using overt forms of racism. Instead they make strong references to liberal democracy and liberal values, a feature which they share with right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. A paradigmatic example is the mission statement of the English Defence League published in 2011, which explicitly refers to the organization as non-violent and non-racist, and underlines:

The EDL promotes the understanding of Islam and the implications for non-Muslims forced to live alongside it. Islam [...] runs counter to all that we hold dear within our British liberal democracy. [...] The EDL is [...] keen to draw its support from all races, all faiths, all political persuasions, and all lifestyle choices. Under its umbrella all people in England, whatever their background or origin, can stand united in a desire to stop the imposition of the rules of Islam on non-believers. In order to ensure the continuity of our culture and its institutions the EDL stands opposed to the creeping Islamisation of our country, because that presents itself as an undemocratic alternative to our cherished way of life.⁴⁰

One of the strategies deployed by the New Right is, thus, “illiberal liberalism,” or what Triadafilopoulos⁴¹ has called “Schmitterian liberalism,” i.e., the idea that some (immigrant) cultures contradict liberal uni-

37. *Ibid.* p. 8.

38. *The Pegida Brand: A Right-wing Populist Success Product.* <http://www.socialeurope.eu/2015/03/pegida-brand/>

39. Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

40. English Defence League (2011), *Mission statement.* <http://www.englishdefenceleague.org/>

41. Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, “Illiberal Means to Liberal Ends? Understanding Recent Immigrant Integration Policies in Europe,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 37, no. 6, (July 2011), pp. 861-880.

versal values and thus have to be excluded. Here the new right uses universal, liberal values in an instrumental way. By alleging that the collective “other” does not share universal, liberal values, the boundaries of who belongs and who does not are effectively redefined.

The fact that the prominent reference to liberal values by the New Right is a political strategy rather than a conviction is suggested by several contradictions in the actions of these movements. EDL protests, for instance, have often exhibited racist chanting, and Nazi salutes⁴² and thus conform in many ways to traditional far right movements. New populist right wing parties show similar incoherencies when it comes to the endorsement of liberal values. The idea of gender equality, for instance, is a major reference point in right wing populist discourses, including the above-mentioned Austrian Freedom Party, as a means of demarcating Muslim immigrants. However, if we look more closely this commitment to gender equality and women’s rights proves largely inconsistent with the parties’ views on family values and policies, which tend to reflect a nationalist concept of the family as the central organizing unit of society.⁴³

Finally, it has to be noted that the radical right in Eastern Europe, as well as in Greece, differs considerably from the New Right in Western Europe. Right-wing parties such as the Hungarian Jobbik (Movement for a better Hungary) or the Golden Dawn in Greece are ideologically extreme parties. Despite being extremist they are far from being politically marginalized: both are the third largest party in their respective countries, and have acted as agenda setters for parties further to the center. They can be defined as extremist because they reject democracy; the Jobbik, for example, has a clearly anti-democratic paramilitary wing: the “Hungarian Guards” sport black uniforms identical to the ones worn by the Nazis in World War II, organize anti-Roma rallies and marches, are involved in violent attacks, and incite hatred.⁴⁴ They were

42. English Defence League: Chaotic Alliance Stirs up Trouble on Streets. *The Guardian*, 12 September 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/11/english-defence-league-chaotic-alliance>

43. Susi Meret and Birte Siim, “Gender, Populism and Politics of Belonging: Discourses of Right Wing Populist Parties in Denmark, Norway and Austria,” in Monika Mokre and Birte Siim, eds., *Negotiating Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.78-95.

44. Margareta Matache, “The Deficit of EU Democracies: A New Cycle of Violence Against Roma Population,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 2, (May 2014), pp. 325-348.

banned in 2009, but quickly re-emerged under a new name: “For a Better Future Civic Guards Association.”

Golden Dawn exhibits a similarly anti-democratic attitude. It has called Greek democracy the “dictatorship of parliamentarism.”⁴⁵ The party has been regularly involved in violent attacks against immigrants, Roma, sexual minorities as well as political opponents. These types of parties and movements use an unequivocally racist rhetoric including anti-Semitism,⁴⁶ whereas anti-Muslim racism, i.e. Islamophobia, is employed relatively rarely. The statements of Golden Dawn’s political candidate Alexandros Plomaritis, who argued that immigrants must be dealt with by reopening “ovens” and turning them into “soap,”⁴⁷ are indicative of this overt rhetoric. The explicit racism of these parties mirrors the attitudes of their electorate. For instance, in Hungary, a survey conducted in 2015⁴⁸ by the Hungarian polling company Median showed that 54 percent of Jobbik voters hold strongly anti-Semitic views.

It is clear, then, that several types of right-wing movements co-exist in Europe today. On the one hand, traditional right wing, neo-fascist parties and movements have re-emerged; these mobilize in an overtly racist manner and target minoritized groups such as Jews and Roma. At the same time we also see the emergence of a “New Right,” which primarily focuses on immigrants, and in particular Muslim(s) (immigrants) as Europe’s “others.”

In order to understand the emergence of the New Right and to fully grasp its “newness,” we turn now to the emergence of Islamophobia in Europe.

The Emergence of Islamophobia in Europe

The term Islamophobia was introduced in contemporary discourses by the English Runnymede Trust in 1997, who described it as “unfounded hostility towards Islam.”⁴⁹ The term has since become

45. Antonis A. Ellinas, “The Rise of Golden Dawn: The New Face of the Far Right in Greece,” *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, (2013), pp. 543-565.

46. Minkenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

47. Fekete, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

48. Mellbevago felmeres a budapestiek fele antiszemita. <http://vs.hu/kozelet/osszes/mellbevago-felmeres-a-budapestiek-fele-antiszemita-0331#s0>

49. Raymond Taras, “Islamophobia never stands still: Race, religion and culture,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, (March 2013), pp. 417-433.

widespread, demonstrating the increasing prevalence and social acceptance of hostility against Muslims; or as the then UN General Secretary Kofi Annan, put in at the beginning of the 2000s:

When the world is compelled to coin a new term, to take account of increasingly widespread bigotry, that is a sad and troubling development. Such is the case with Islamophobia.⁵⁰

At the same time the use of the term is also misleading to some extent, since it conceals the racial component of the phenomenon. It might be more accurate to speak of anti-Muslim racism. In this chapter, the term Islamophobia is very much understood as a form of racism that is targeted against Muslims. Islamophobia draws from a “historical anti-Muslimism and anti-Islamism and fuses them with racist ideologies of the twentieth century to construct a modern concept.”⁵¹ The 9/11 bombings are often cited as a triggering event for the spread of Islamophobia. However, its emergence in its current form in Europe predates 2001. It is closely linked to the end of the Cold War in 1989, when political attention started to shift from materialist concerns, questions of class and distribution of resources, to questions of immaterial values, such as culture. It is no accident that the first debates to fundamentally question Muslim practices, and the belonging of (visibly identifiable) Muslim(s) (immigrants) to Europe, emerged precisely in 1989. These debates pertained to the wearing of the hijab (headscarf) in French public schools.

Islamophobia, like other forms of racism, involves processes of naturalization and group-essentializing. As Bleich⁵² rightly argues, “questioning or even criticizing aspects of Islamic doctrine or practices of specific subgroups of Muslims is not automatically Islamophobia.” However, if from these examples it is concluded that Islam or Muslims “as a whole are worthy of condemnation, it becomes an indiscriminate attitude that constitutes Islamophobia.”⁵³ Moreover, it is crucial to see that Islamophobia is based on the concepts of civilization and culture. It holds the view that Islam, and ergo Muslims, are fundamentally “incom-

50. Erik Bleich, “What Is Islamophobia and How Much Is There? Theorizing and Measuring an Emerging Comparative Concept,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 55, no. 12, (December 2011), pp. 1581-1600.

51. Taras, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

52. Bleich, *op. cit.*, p. 1585.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 1585.

patible with and inferior to” Western culture.⁵⁴ Hence, as noted above, illiberal liberalism—that is, the reference to liberal values that are defined as innately Western/European—is widely employed to exclude and racialize the Muslim “other.”

The fact that Islamophobia rests on the assumption that Islam is incompatible with the West also reveals its close relationship with the process of European integration and the accompanying formation of a European identity. As Bunzl highlights, modern anti-Semitism as a product of the 19th century was closely related to nationalism and the emergence of the nation state, whereby the Jewish “other” served primarily as a marker of who did or did not belong to the national community. Islamophobia, on the other hand, determines who belongs or does not belong to Europe. As Bunzl remarks, Islamophobes are not worried whether Muslims can be good Germans, Italians or Danes; rather they question whether Muslims can be good Europeans.⁵⁵ Islamophobia hence functions less in the interest of national, ethnic purification than as an instrument to fortify Europe in face of international (to a great extent Muslim) migration.⁵⁶ “Culturally unassimilated, ideologically unassimilable and transnationally implicated in disloyalty,”⁵⁷ the racialization of Muslims has produced “intolerable subjects.” The emergence and spread of Islamophobia thus provides proof anew of racism’s ability to adapt to new historical circumstances, and to create allegedly immutable differences between groups.

Racism and Right Wing Mobilization: An Expression of the Contradictions of Liberal Democracy

In the previous sections I have suggested that racism is not a paradoxical anomaly within liberal democracy; instead it is better understood as an expression of contradictions inherent in liberal democracy. I want to reiterate this point in the following.

54. Matti Bunzl, “Between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia,” *American Ethnologist*, vol. 32, no. 4, (November 2005), pp. 499-508.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

57. Alana Lentin and Gavin Titley, “The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: Mediated Minarets, Intolerable Subjects,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (April 2012). p. 124.

We saw in the section on Liberal Democracy and Racism that the liberal democratic principle of equality is actually one of the reasons why inequalities, including racial inequalities, continue to exist. Focusing on formal equality as a matter of equal treatment falls short of ensuring substantial equality, which relies on taking into account the different positions of groups in society.

In the section on Right Wing Extremism in the New Europe, I have, moreover, highlighted that the success of the “New Right” is a consequence of the increasing erosion of political trust among European citizens. To put it differently, fewer and fewer people believe that democratic governments can actually achieve anything. This erosion of trust is not solely a consequence of the decreasing power of national governments in the face of globalization. Again it is the result of contradictions inherent in liberal democracy.

Democracy, as Margaret Canovan⁵⁸ has argued, comprises two visions: the redemptive and the pragmatic. These visions rely on each other as much as they contradict each other. The redemptive vision promotes the idea of democracy as a form of government by the people for the people. Pragmatically, democracy means institutions. Institutions do not simply limit power; they also constitute it and make it effective.⁵⁹ Redemptive democracy, however, is characterized by a strong impulse against institutions, and the urge to instead act directly, and spontaneously, and to overcome alienation.⁶⁰ However, in the words of Ralf Dahrendorf: “democracy is a form of government, not a steambath of popular feelings.”⁶¹ In particular, the liberal principles enshrined in liberal democracies put constraints on the power of the people and their popular feelings (i.e. the redemptive side of democracy). Liberal principles restrain a crude majoritarianism that neglects or overrides the rights of minorities.⁶² It is these contradictions that the New Right in Europe effectively instrumentalizes for its political goals.

Lastly, this chapter has also highlighted that new forms of racism, such as Islamophobia, are (ab)using liberal values in order to racialize and exclude the “other.” Through accusing the “Muslim other” collec-

58. Canovan, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

61. Canovan, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

tively of not sharing universal, liberal values, the boundaries of who does and who does not belong to Europe are (re)defined.

The Duty Not Only to Remember but to Think

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to the Shoah as a founding myth for the “New Europe.” Observing the emergence of this myth at the time, Claude Lefort pointed out that:

For the last few years, we have been taught that it is our duty to remember. That is certainly a positive development. Yet the doctrine that urges us not to forget the crimes against mankind is accompanied by the hope that this memory will prevent us from repeating the atrocities of the past. But without the duty to think, the duty to remember will be meaningless.⁶³

More than ever since WWII, Europe today needs to think, and to understand that the “migrant” or the “Muslim” serve increasingly as a surrogate for race, and that these groups are subjected or are extremely vulnerable to racism. Liberal democracy as an institution alone will not save us from racism, nor do the current political leaders in Europe seem likely to come to our rescue. In Europe the electoral dynamics still work largely against ethnicized and racialized minorities. And as we have emphasized, while liberal democracy is challenged by racism it is its own blind spots and inherent paradoxes that partly provide the basis for that challenge and enable new strategies for racist discourse to exclude the “other.” What is needed, therefore, is vocal and dynamic popular opposition to current discourses about immigrants, Muslims and other European “others.” We need a Europe that thinks and speaks out.

At the time of writing this chapter (autumn 2015) the emergence of such an opposition is in full bloom. In many Western European countries, such as Austria and Germany, a significant number of people are heading daily to the streets to support refugees, to provide those that are usually portrayed as Europe’s “others” with a helping hand and a warm welcome. It remains to be seen, however, whether European citizens will also counter racism and processes of racialization at the ballot box. As things stand, it seems plausible that right-wing populist parties will continue to grow.

63. Probst, *op.cit.*, p. 58.